



**EXPERIENTIAL TESTIMONIES
BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT
OF CHRIST**

VOLUME 5

THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD



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1. I No Longer Stand Aside When Things Happen

By Steven, USA

I'd been quite busy doing my duty, and I hadn't encountered any pruning and disciplining for quite a long time. Every day, aside from my regular spiritual devotionals, eating and drinking God's words, and listening to hymns, I had just been doing my duty. At the end of the day, I hadn't learned any lessons, and neither did I know how to learn lessons. I passed each day like this, in a muddle, and felt empty inside. After some time, I felt that my life hadn't grown at all, and hadn't entered the truth in any aspect; everything remained at the level of words and doctrines only, and I was very troubled about this. One day, I read God's words: **"On what basis is the hope of salvation established? It is established on the basis of your ability to strive toward the truth, ponder on the truth, and put effort into the truth when each matter occurs. Only on this basis can you understand the truth and practice the truth so that you attain salvation. However, if you are always a bystander when matters occur—not giving any assessments or characterizations, and not expressing any personal opinions—and you have no views on anything, or, even if you do have views, you do not express them, and you do not know whether they are right or wrong, but just keep them under lock and key in your mind and think about them, then you will end up still not having obtained the truth. Think about it, this is like sitting at a great feast while suffering from a great famine. Are you not pitiful? In God's work, if you have believed for ten years but have been a bystander for all of that time, or you have believed for 20 or 30 years and been a bystander for all of that time, then in the end, when it's time to determine your outcome, the score God assigns to your record will be**

two points, and so you will be a two-bit fool, and your chance to obtain the truth and your hope of being saved will have been completely ruined by yourself. In the very end, you will be labeled as a two-bit fool, and it will serve you right, won't it? (Yes.) What's the secret to not being a two-bit fool? (The secret is to not be a bystander.) Don't be a bystander. You believe in God, so then you must experience God's work in order to gain the truth. Some may ask, 'So, You want me to involve myself in everything? But people say, "Do not comment on what is not your concern."' Asking you to involve yourself means asking you to seek the truth and learn lessons from the things you encounter. For example, when you encounter a certain type of person, you must gain discernment through their manifestations and the things they do. If they violate the truth, you must discern what it is they did that violates the truth. If others say that a person is an evil person, you must discern what it is they said and did and what manifestations of evil doing they have for them to be characterized as an evil person. If others say that this person doesn't defend the interests of God's house and helps outsiders at its expense, then you should find out what it is this person has been doing. But after finding out, it's not enough just to know these things. You also have to ponder: 'Could I do such things? If no one reminded me, I might do the same things too, and would I not then have the same outcome as that person? Isn't this dangerous? Fortunately, God laid out this environment to give me a heads-up, which is the greatest protection for me!' After pondering on it, you realize one thing: You cannot follow the path which that type of person is following, you cannot be that type of person, you must admonish yourself. No matter what things you encounter, you must learn lessons from them. If there are things you don't fully understand and that you

feel in your heart are odd, you should ask questions about them and find out about them, and ascertain the true state of affairs by seeking the truth. This is not curiosity; it is being earnest. Being earnest doesn't mean going through the motions or following the herd—it is an attitude of taking responsibility, it means getting clear on problems and then seeking the truth to resolve them, and thus having a path of practice, the ability to practice accurately, and a feeling of being at peace and at ease when faced with the same kind of situation again. You are being earnest based on the principle of trying to understand the facts and the true state of affairs and from them gain the truth and learn how to view people and things, rather than following other people and going with the flow in all matters. Only by being earnest in your actions can you come to practice the truth and handle things based on the principles. Those who aren't earnest are liable to follow other people and go with the flow, and in this way they are likely to violate the truth principles”

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). God's words pointed out to people the path for pursuing the truth, which is to learn lessons from the people, events, and things that we encounter daily. Whether it's something we see, hear, or experience personally, we should seek the truth in it. Especially when we see someone disturbing and disrupting the church's work, we cannot just listen out of curiosity and leave it at that. Instead, we should actively understand the specific behavior of that person, seek the truth to gain discernment, and learn lessons from it, pondering on how we can avoid making the same mistakes ourselves and not disturb and disrupt the church's work. Only in this way can we understand the truth and learn lessons. I thought about how God expresses so many truths and arranges various people, events, things, and environments for us to train at entering the truth reality. For example, the

appearance of evil people, false leaders, and antichrists in the church serves to train us in viewing people and events according to God's words. But I hadn't been earnest about the people, events, and things around me. Whatever had happened, I just listened and then let it pass. Every day, I had always attended to matters superficially, and my life hadn't grown. If I continued like this, my life would suffer a great loss. Pondering on this, I felt more brightened inside, and I wanted from then on to start practicing the truth according to God's words.

Unexpectedly, on the same day, I saw that Sister Winnie suddenly left all the work groups. I thought to myself, was she dismissed? Thinking about what God fellowshiped, I realized that God wanted us to be curious about the things happening around us in daily life, get involved, seek the truth, and learn lessons from them, instead of just being bystanders. So, I asked some brothers and sisters about the reason for her dismissal. I learned that she was arrogant and liked to lecture others. Ever since she took on the role as the supervisor, whenever she saw that the effectiveness of the brothers' and sisters' duties was declining, she would lecture them without distinguishing right from wrong. Some brothers and sisters were afraid whenever she wanted to follow up on their work, and they complained about her a lot. When the brothers and sisters offered suggestions, she wouldn't accept and would harshly scold them instead. Everyone felt constrained by her and reported her behavior one after another. Moreover, her duty bore no fruit, so the church dismissed her according to the principles. I was surprised to hear about her performance. I didn't expect her to be so arrogant that she could lecture people arbitrarily, constrain them, and directly affect the gospel work of the church. Her being dismissed was God's righteousness. Also, it was done to protect the work of the church and the interests of the brothers and sisters. Next, I reflected on

myself. Did I have the same problem of lecturing others as Winnie did? I recalled the experience from two years ago. At that time, I was practicing doing my duty as a leader. When the brothers and sisters had difficulties or were in bad states, they would come to me for fellowship, and I would share my experiences according to their states. This helped the brothers and sisters to some extent. Sister Rita who collaborated with me often asked me for advice when she encountered problems she couldn't understand. I started to feel that I had some truth realities and that my ability to view people and things was better than others. For a period of time, Susanne and Tiffany did not cooperate harmoniously. Susanne frequently reported problems Tiffany had, and Tiffany often said something bad about Susanne as well. I thought both of them had issues and were not seeking the truth or reflecting on themselves. Once, Susanne again reported that Tiffany was not following the principles in her duty. Without understanding the actual situation, I assumed that Susanne was just being nitpicky again, and I lectured her harshly, "Why don't you reflect on yourself? You always focus on others, hold onto their mistakes and do not let go. You two are constantly blaming each other. Aren't those just verbal spats? This is disrupting and disturbing the church life!" Later, I found out that Susanne's complaint was valid, but after my "pruning," she was too afraid to report any of Tiffany's violations of the principles. Eventually, Tiffany acted against the principles and caused significant losses to the work of the church. Seeing that my unprincipled pruning only brought harm to others and caused disturbances, I realized that Winnie's being dismissed was also a warning and reminder for me. I knew that my corrupt disposition in this aspect was also severe, so I prayed in my heart, asking God to guide me to understand the truth and know myself better, so that I wouldn't cause any more harm to the brothers and sisters.

One day, I noticed that Sister Lorna hadn't created many designs, and I thought to myself that her efficiency in designing had been low for some time. I had given her some good methods and ways before, but her efficiency still hadn't improved much. I felt that she was just doing her duty without any burden, not striving to improve. As I thought of this, I began to feel a surge of anger and wanted to confront her about her issues. However, just as I was about to criticize her, I remembered that Winnie liked to reprimand people casually, causing them to feel constrained while doing their duties. I thought to myself, "What if Lorna is not being negligent in her duty but has other difficulties? Wouldn't she be constrained if I blamed her without understanding what was going on? I should ask about her duty first." It was then that I found out Lorna really wanted to do her duty well, but due to her lower caliber and lack of grasping of the principles, she often got stuck on some details. She hadn't been able to apply the methods I had taught her flexibly, and it led to her low efficiency. I then provided her with some actual guidance based on her difficulties. Later, her efficiency improved to a certain level. Afterward, I thought to myself, "Fortunately, I didn't start by scolding Lorna, or I would have hurt her." So, I sought the truth and reflected on the issues within myself.

During my spiritual devotional, I read God's words: **"Can you make people understand the truth and enter into reality if you only preach words and doctrines to lecture and prune them? If what you fellowship about is not practical, if it is nothing but words and doctrines, then no matter how much you prune and lecture them, it will be to no avail. Do you think people being afraid of you, and doing what you tell them to, and not daring to object, is the same as them understanding the truth and being submissive? This is a major mistake; life entry is not so simple. Some leaders are like a new manager trying to make a strong**

impression, they try to impose their new-found authority on God's chosen ones so that everyone submits to them, thinking that this will make their job easier. If you lack the truth reality, then before long your true stature will be revealed, your true colors will be exposed, and you could well be eliminated. In some administrative work, a little pruning and discipline is acceptable. But if you are incapable of fellowshipping the truth, in the end, you will still be unable to solve problems, and it will affect the results of the work. If, no matter what issues appear in the church, you keep lecturing people and casting blame—if all you ever do is acting in a bad-tempered manner—then this is your corrupt disposition revealing itself, and you have shown the ugly face of your corruption. If you always stand on a pedestal and lecture people like this, then as time goes on, people will be unable to receive the provision of life from you, they will not gain anything practical, and instead will detest you and be disgusted by you. In addition, there will be some people who, having been influenced by you due to a lack of discernment, will likewise lecture others and prune them. They will likewise get angry and lose their tempers. Not only will you be unable to solve people's problems—you will also be fostering their corrupt dispositions. And is that not leading them onto the path toward perdition? Is that not an act of evil? A leader should lead primarily by fellowshipping about the truth and providing life. If you always stand on a pedestal and lecture others, will they be able to understand the truth? If you work in this way for a while, when people come to see you clearly for what you are, they are going to desert you. Can you bring people before God by working in this way? You certainly cannot; all you can do is foul up the work of the church and cause all God's chosen people to loathe you and desert you” (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's words, I understood that in doing our work, we cannot simply prune and lecture people indiscriminately; we must consider the actual background and the real situation. If the matter involves disrupting and disturbing the church's work or harming the interests of God's house, then the person can be pruned or dismissed and reassigned. However, if a brother or sister does not understand the truth principles, leading to some deviations and problems in doing their duties, or their corrupt disposition leads to the results of them doing their duties being poor, then we must fellowship the truth more and provide instruction and help, allowing them to see their issues and have a path of practice. If we always get angry and lecture people regardless of the situation or background, not only will this fail to solve their actual problems and difficulties, but it will also constrain them and negatively affect the work. For example, when I saw that Lorna's efficiency in doing her duty hadn't improved and that she hadn't made much progress for a while, I'd assumed she wasn't putting her heart into it, and I had inwardly revealed hotheadedness and wanted to teach her a lesson. But in fact, she too wanted to do her duty well; it was just that she had a lower level of caliber and didn't fully grasp the principles, which led to her low efficiency in doing it. What she needed was more help from me. If I pruned and lectured people without considering the background, or each person's caliber and stature, not only would I fail to help them, but I might constrain them, causing them to become negative and depressed and unable to do their duty properly. Wouldn't this be disruptive? Over time, the brothers and sisters would likely discern me and reject me. This reminded me of Winnie. Whenever she saw the brothers and sisters were doing things that weren't in line with her wishes or made slight mistakes in their work, she would assert her status and lecture them, causing them to feel constrained, so the brothers

and sisters were afraid whenever they heard that she was coming to check on their work. Because of her arbitrary pruning, she seriously disrupted and disturbed the gospel work, leading to widespread complaints and numerous reports against her. Eventually, she was dismissed by the church based on principle. This showed that not acting according to the truth and lecturing people according to one's own will could lead to very serious consequences.

I pondered again: Why did I have a tendency to lecture others indiscriminately? What was the root cause behind this? So, I looked for related words of God and came across this passage: **“Arrogance is the root of man’s corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more unreasonable they are, and the more unreasonable they are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with an arrogant disposition consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God, and they have no God-fearing hearts. Even though people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one’s arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His sovereignty, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power and control others. This sort of person does not have a God-fearing heart in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their reason, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him,**

and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most and have absolutely no God-fearing hearts. If people wish to get to where they have God-fearing hearts, then they must first resolve their arrogant disposition. The more thoroughly you resolve your arrogant disposition, the more you will have a God-fearing heart, and only then can you submit to Him and obtain the truth and know Him. Only those who gain the truth are genuinely human” (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading God’s words, I realized that my tendency to lecture people indiscriminately stemmed from my arrogant and conceited disposition. This arrogance and conceit meant that I failed to rationally dissect the nature of situations I encountered, didn’t really understand the background of issues, and viewed people and events based on my own experiences and imaginings, overly trusting my own judgment, indiscriminately passing verdicts on people and lecturing them. Reflecting on when doing the duty as a leader, I saw that because I was able to fellowship the truth and solve some problems, and the sisters I collaborated with often came to me to seek and discuss issues they couldn’t see through, I began to feel that my ability to view people and things was better than others. Thus, I took this as capital and started getting arrogant. For example, when Susanne had reported that there were issues with Tiffany’s performance of her duty, under normal circumstances, I should have first understood and verified the situation and then fellowshiped to address it according to the actual circumstances. However, I had judged the situation subjectively. Seeing that the two of them usually didn’t cooperate harmoniously and didn’t know how to reflect on themselves when matters arose, I had concluded that Susanne’s report about Tiffany must have been prompted by hotheadedness, and that she was just nitpicking, and I had reprimanded Susanne without remotely trying to determine who was in the

right and who was in the wrong. As a result, Susanne became constrained, and when she later noticed that Tiffany was violating the principles in doing her duty, she hadn't dared to report it, leading to losses for the church's interests. Similarly, with Lorna's issue, I had also dissected it based on my experience, thinking that since I had already guided her and she hadn't made progress, it must be that she wasn't putting her heart into her duty. My arrogant disposition had almost led me to scold her, which would have caused her to be constrained and anguished. This made me realize that my arrogant disposition was too severe. I was treating people based on my own imaginings, taking my standards of measurement as the truth principles—my arrogance was truly unreasonable! Whenever I next encounter issues in the future, I must approach them with a God-fearing heart, first coming before God to seek more, and thoroughly understanding the issues of the brothers and sisters. I cannot blindly jump to conclusions or indiscriminately reprimand people based on my arrogant disposition, as this has a tendency not only to harm the brothers and sisters, but also to disrupt and disturb the church's work and offend God's disposition. After that, I then sought the truth to resolve this aspect of my corrupt disposition.

In my seeking, I read God's words: **“God's chosen people should, at the very least, possess conscience and reason, and interact, associate, and work together with others according to the principles and standards that God requires of people. This is the best approach. This is able to satisfy God. So, what are the truth principles required by God? That people be understanding of others when they are weak and negative, being considerate of their pain and difficulties, and then inquire about these things, offer help and support, and read them God's words to help them solve their problems, enabling them to understand God's intentions and stop being weak, and bringing them**

before God. Isn't this way of practicing in line with the principles? Practicing in this way is in line with the truth principles. Naturally, relationships of this kind are even more so in line with the truth principles. When people are deliberately causing disturbances and disruptions, or deliberately doing their duty in a perfunctory way, if you see this and are able to point these things out to them, reprimand them, and help them according to the principles, then this is in line with the truth principles. If you turn a blind eye, or condone their behavior and cover for them, and even go so far as to say nice things to praise and applaud them, these ways of interacting with people, dealing with issues, and handling problems, are clearly at odds with the truth principles, and have no basis in the words of God. So, these ways of interacting with people and dealing with issues are clearly improper, and this really is not easy to discover if they are not dissected and discerned according to God's words" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). **"How does God treat each and every person? Some people are of immature stature; or are young; or have believed in God for only a short time; or are not bad by nature essence, not malicious, but are just a bit ignorant or lacking in caliber. Or they are subject to too many constraints, and are yet to understand the truth, yet to have life entry, so it is difficult for them to keep from doing foolish things or committing ignorant acts. But God does not fixate on people's passing foolishness; He looks only at their hearts. If they are resolved to pursue the truth, they are then correct, and when this is their objective, then God is observing them, waiting for them, and giving them time and opportunities that allow them to enter. It is not the case that God will write them off over a single transgression. That is something people often do; God never**

treats people like that. If God does not treat people in that way, then why do people treat others in that way? Does this not show their corrupt disposition? This is precisely their corrupt disposition. You have to look at how God treats ignorant and foolish people, how He treats those with immature stature, how He treats the normal revelations of humanity's corrupt disposition, and how He treats those who are malicious. God treats different people in different ways, and He also has various ways of managing different people's myriad conditions. You must understand these truths. Once you have understood these truths, you will then know how to experience matters and treat people according to principles" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Events, and Things Nearby). After reading God's words, I came to realize that each person's caliber and stature are different, and the backgrounds and environments they are in at different times also vary. So are their states and difficulties. Although they all have issues and deviations in doing duties, the nature of these problems is different. For some, who are just starting to practice doing a duty, they may struggle due to unfamiliarity with the professional skills, and in such cases, we should offer help and fellowship with love, guiding them to understand God's intentions, so they can have the path to practice in doing their duties. For others, if they understand the truth but fail to put it into practice, consistently being perfunctory and disrupting and disturbing the church's work, then they need pruning. If the nature is severe, it may be necessary to reassign or dismiss them according to the principles. In God's house, there are principles for treating people; it depends on their backgrounds and cannot be generalized. However, when I treated the brothers and sisters, I often lacked principles, arbitrarily passing verdicts on and reprimanding them out of arrogant disposition, which was utterly

unreasonable! Reflecting on Sister Susanne, although she became biased against Tiffany, I should have first verified whether her report about Tiffany violating principles in her duty was true or not. If I had handled the situation merely as nitpicking without understanding it, not only would this fail to help Susanne, but it would also bring her harm and constraint. Similarly, although Sister Lorna's efficiency in doing her duty was low, I needed to understand whether this was due to her lack of caliber or because she was being perfunctory and indifferent in doing her duty. I must first gain a clear understanding and then handle it according to principles. Simply judging based on appearances and jumping to conclusions not only fails to help others but may also cause them to become even more negative and passive. Now that I understand some principles for treating people, I need to practice treating the brothers and sisters according to God's words in the future.

Recently, although I haven't encountered any pruning, reflecting on Winnie's failure has made me realize my own tendency to reprimand others indiscriminately. I've realized that this is caused by being dominated by my arrogant disposition, and also learned the principles for treating brothers and sisters, having some gains. Now, I see that seeking the truth and learning lessons from daily situations are truly essential. I've come to realize that if we want to understand the truth and grow in life, we don't necessarily have to wait for major pruning, trials, or refinements to gain something. The key is to start with the people, events, and things around us. Whether it's what we see, hear, or personally experience, we should engage in them with a heart that seeks the truth. Then, we should seek the relevant words of God and learn to view people and things, comport ourselves, and act according to the truth. This way, our life can keep on growing.

2. The Ups and Downs of a Soldier's Gospel-Preaching Path

By Ayden, Myanmar

In 2021, soon after I accepted God's gospel of the last days, I began preaching the gospel. One time, I invited more than 20 comrades to listen to a sermon. Through reading Almighty God's words and fellowshiping on and bearing witness to His work of the last days, they ultimately all accepted Almighty God. I was extremely happy, and I had the faith to continue preaching the gospel.

Not long after I started preaching the gospel, my platoon leader began to persecute me. He said I had gone overboard with my faith in God, and he also said this in front of the troops, "I was thinking about cultivating you to become a squad leader, but now you believe in God and don't listen to me—you will regret this! In the future, even if your parents die, I still won't let you take leave." After hearing the platoon leader's words, some comrades also ridiculed me: "Everyone believes in Buddha; by believing in God, you're insulting our faith." Confronted with ridicule and humiliation from so many people, I started to feel a bit weak, and I hastily walked away. I found a quiet place, knelt down, and prayed to God: "God, the platoon leader scolded and humiliated me, and my comrades ridiculed me. I am so weak; may You give me faith and strength. I know that I am being tested, and I cannot let it affect me or interfere with my duty." Soon after this, the front lines went into battle, and the troops kept a close watch over the rooms. One night, I was preparing to go water the new believers, but it occurred to me that we were being kept on a short leash recently, and whoever got caught sneaking out would be punished. They would be beaten and scolded or tied up outside for one night. I was worried that if the

platoon leader knew that I often went out, he would certainly scold, beat, and humiliate me again. Thinking of this, I didn't dare to go out and water the newcomers. I spoke my thoughts to Carter, whom I was partnered with in my duty. Carter said, "You care so much about your face. God has arranged such an environment for us to see how we experience it, to see whether we can learn any lessons. You must pray to God more and reflect more on yourself. If you are governed by your vanity and self-respect and give up on your duty because you can't handle the ridicule of others, what kind of problem is this? If you do not go to water all those newcomers in the village, then are you not treating your duty lightly and being irresponsible?" He also sent me a passage of God's words: **"How you regard God's commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man's supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God's commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed. People must gain a thorough understanding of how to treat what God entrusts to them and, at the very least, they must comprehend that the commissions He entrusts to humanity are exaltations and special favors from God, and that they are most glorious things. Everything else can be abandoned. Even if a person must sacrifice their own life, they must still fulfill God's commission"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). Through reading this passage of God's words, I understood that the attitude of holding oneself responsible for fulfilling one's duty was very

important. God uplifted me and gave me the opportunity to perform my duty, so I must hold onto my duty and do my best to complete it. I am a created being, and I have eaten and drunk so many of God's words and understood God's intentions and demands, but now I wanted to give up my duty as soon as I faced some difficulties. This was betraying God! I thought of the civilians here who could face war at any time, who were in a state of anxiety every day. God put me into this environment to let me preach the gospel to these people without delay, to water these new believers properly, so that they can lay down a foundation upon the true way and attain salvation, and receive God's protection amid disaster. God hoped to see my loyalty and hoped that I could have faith and stand firm in my testimony, and did not want to see me shrink back when performing my duty. But I couldn't stand being faced with humiliation, and I treated my duty lightly and irresponsibly. This is a betrayal of God, more severe than that of Judas, and I deserve to be cursed. Through reading God's words, I understood that no matter the situation, no matter how much I suffered or how much I was humiliated, and even if it costs me my life, I must complete all that God has entrusted me with. This is the responsibility and duty that I should fulfill. After that, I partnered up with two of my brothers to preach the gospel and water the newcomers. 27 people accepted the gospel in one month, and afterward they were handed over to the church. I was very grateful for God's guidance, and I felt at peace in my heart.

Later on, our troops were transferred, and I was relocated to another place. Some newcomers didn't know that the platoon leader persecuted believers in God, so they tried to preach the gospel to him, and the platoon leader began to look into who was preaching the gospel to the villagers. I felt scared: "Would my preaching the gospel to the villagers be exposed? Would the troop leader arrest me and send me to prison? Then I would

certainly suffer and be humiliated. It would be better if I waited a while until we had a longer leash to resume preaching the gospel. That way, I wouldn't get caught; I don't want to be humiliated again." So, I didn't go out to preach the gospel for three days. Even though I would attend gatherings online every night, I felt empty inside. I didn't feel as at ease as when I was doing my duty before.

Later on, one of my sisters came to know about my state and sent me a passage of God's words: **"You believe yourselves to possess the utmost sincerity and loyalty toward Me. You think that you are so kindhearted, so compassionate, and have devoted so much to Me. You think that you have done more than enough for Me. But have you ever held this up against your actions? I say you are plenty arrogant, plenty greedy, plenty perfunctory; the tricks with which you fool Me are plenty clever, and you have plenty of contemptible intentions and contemptible methods. Your loyalty is too meager, your earnestness too paltry, and your conscience even more lacking. ... When you perform your duty, you are thinking of your own interests, of your own personal safety, of the members of your family. What have you ever done that was for Me? When have you ever thought of Me? When have you ever devoted yourself, at any cost, to Me and My work? Where is the evidence of your compatibility with Me? Where is the reality of your loyalty to Me? Where is the reality of your submission to Me?"** (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Seek the Way of Compatibility With Christ).

After reading God's words I then reflected on myself. Before, I thought that I was dedicating and expending myself enough for God. After I started believing in God, I was always preaching the gospel, and would do so even if I was on the front line. One time, I came back from watering newcomers, and my commander thought I was the enemy and was preparing to shoot

me. Luckily, one of my brothers promptly noticed that it was me, and so he didn't pull the trigger. I believed that preaching the gospel and expending myself for God in this way, and suffering a lot while also gaining some people already showed that I was loyal to God, and He should be satisfied. But actually, I wasn't loyal at all. When doing my duty, the first thing I thought about was my own face and interests. I was afraid that the platoon leader would beat, scold, and humiliate me if he caught me going out to preach the gospel; I was afraid of losing face. So, I stopped doing my duty and didn't preach the gospel or water newcomers anymore. When the platoon leader looked into who was preaching the gospel to villagers, I was afraid he would find out that it was me and that they would arrest and imprison me, so I stopped doing my duty yet again. When faced with such circumstances again and again, all I thought about was my own face. Whenever something involved my face or some humiliation, I would toss my duty to the side and stop performing it. I saw that even though I was willing to expend myself for God, whenever my own interests were involved, I chose to preserve myself and did not defend the church's work at all. I was not responsible in the performance of my duty, and I did not have a conscience or reason. Now I finally recognized that I was not loyal, that I was not sincere enough toward God, and that I was too selfish and contemptible!

At that time, I read a passage of God's words and was very inspired. Almighty God says: **"Spreading the gospel is everyone's responsibility and obligation. At any time, regardless of what we hear, or what we see, or what kind of treatment we encounter, we must always uphold this responsibility of spreading the gospel. Under no circumstances can we give up on this duty because of negativity or weakness. The duty to spread the gospel is not smooth sailing, but fraught with danger. When**

you spread the gospel, you will not face angels, or aliens, or robots. You will face only evil and corrupt humanity, living demons, beasts—they are all humans surviving in this evil space, this evil world, who have been deeply corrupted by Satan, and resist God. Therefore, in the process of spreading the gospel, there are certainly all sorts of dangers, to say nothing of petty slander, sneers, and misunderstandings, which are common occurrences. If you truly regard spreading the gospel as a responsibility, as an obligation, and as your duty, then you will be able to regard these things correctly and even handle them correctly. You will not give up on your responsibility and your obligation, nor will you deviate from your original intention to spread the gospel and testify to God because of these things, and you will never give up on this responsibility, for this is your duty. How should this duty be understood? It is the value and primary obligation of human life. Spreading the good news of God’s work in the last days and the gospel of God’s work is the value of human life” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). After reading God’s words, I understood that preaching the gospel is not smooth sailing. Because we are dealing with corrupt mankind, we will certainly encounter various dangers when preaching the gospel, such as being beaten and scolded, humiliated, derided, and slandered—this is inevitable. Preaching the gospel is the unshirkable duty of all who believe in God. No matter what persecution befalls them, and no matter how others humiliate or ridicule them, one cannot give up their own duty, and especially when the critical moment comes, one can only be remembered by God when they perform their duties well. The duty and responsibility that God has given me is of the utmost importance, and I should let go of my vanity and self-respect and continue preaching the gospel and bearing

witness to God, bringing more people before God and fulfill my responsibility. This is the best way to bear witness to God and humiliate Satan. No matter how the platoon leader scolds or humiliates me, no matter how my comrades ridicule me, and even if they are going to tie me up to a tree and hang me, I still must preach the gospel and bear witness to God.

Later, our troops were transferred yet again to another place, and there was no way for me to go out and preach the gospel, so I preached the gospel online with several of my brothers in the army. I created a group on my phone and added these brothers to the group. Unexpectedly, the platoon leader took my phone when I wasn't paying attention, and he said to me, "If you prove that you do not believe in God in the form of a written pledge, I will give your phone back." I said, "I didn't do anything wrong. Why did you confiscate my phone?" The platoon leader said: "You have taken your faith in God too far. The Wa people's faith is in their party—believing in God is illegal!" As he said this, he grabbed a shovel and hit me. The next day, the platoon leader discovered the chat history between my brothers and me on my phone, and also found God's words as well as the church's films and videos. He reported this to his superiors at the headquarters. The commander asked me: "Where did you accept Almighty God? What is your position in the church? To whom have you preached the gospel? How many believers are there among our troops?" When they were asking me, I was scared, and my body was shaking a bit. I thought: "If I tell the truth, then I am betraying God like Judas, but if I don't, then the commander and others will go ask these brothers who preached the gospel to them, and if they say that it was me, my fate will certainly be even worse." I was praying to God repeatedly in my heart, asking Him to guide me and give me the strength to stand firm in my testimony, so that no matter how I was humiliated or how I suffered, I would not sell out my brothers and sisters and do as Judas did.

And then, I said: “My belief in Almighty God means gathering and worshipping God.” I didn’t answer any of their questions after that. In the end, they sent me back and placed me in confinement. They chained me and three other people together by our feet. When we ate, slept, and went to the toilet, we did it all four of us together, and it was also difficult to walk. My heart grew a bit weak: “I have been placed in confinement and am handcuffed and shackled. If the nonbelieving comrades saw me, what would they think? Would they also say that I had taken my faith in God too far?” When I thought of these things, I felt embarrassed and felt that I lost face. I was on the verge of a mental breakdown. I wanted God to help me break free from this environment, and I didn’t want to be humiliated like this anymore. I had to wear handcuffs when I went to eat, and other soldiers ridiculed me: “Why don’t you ask your God to remove your handcuffs?” I ate with my head down, not daring to look up, and prayed silently in my heart: “God, I am in pain. My stature is too small. May You guide me and give me faith and strength so that I can face the humiliation of others.” After praying, I felt that I was stronger, and I thought of a hymn called “A Choice Without Regret”:

1 When Satan’s arrests and persecution of Christians grow increasingly savage, when the city is full of dark horror, and I flee wherever I can, when human rights are wantonly deprived and confined, when my only company is a long night of pain, I shall not waver in my faith in God, nor betray the Creator, the one true God. Almighty true God, my heart belongs to You. Incarceration can only control my body, but it cannot stop my footsteps in following You. Painful suffering, a bumpy road, with the guidance of Your words, my heart is without fear; with the company of Your love, my heart is sated.

2 When Satan's devils' ruinous torture grows ever more severe, when searing pain hits me again and again, when the agony of the flesh is about to reach its limit, when my life is about to be taken in the final moment, never will I give in to the great red dragon, never will I be a Judas, a mark of shame on God. Almighty true God, I will be loyal to You unto death. Satan can only torture and destroy my body, but it cannot destroy the faith and love I have for You. Life and death shall forever be under Your sovereignty and arrangements. I will forsake everything to testify to You. If I can testify to You and bring shames upon Satan, I will die without complaint.

How honored I am to follow Christ and pursue the love of God in this life! With a heart and spirit, I should repay God's love; I am willing to forsake all for testifying about God. For as long as I live, giving my entire being to God is a choice I shall never regret.

—Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs

This song gave me faith. No matter how others treated me, I could not betray God. Following God is a choice that I will not regret in all my life. I must let go of my reputation and risk everything to stand firm in my testimony.

In the past, I always felt that being persecuted as a believer in God was a humiliating matter, but later, I remembered a passage of God's words that reversed my point of view. Almighty God says: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. If you do not worship God but live within your filthy flesh, then are you not just a beast in human attire? Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to**

today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. In this world, man wears the devil's clothing, eats food from the devil, and works and serves under the devil's thumb, becoming completely trampled in its filth. If you do not grasp the meaning of life or obtain the true way, then what significance is there in living like this? You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). From God's words, I came to understand that devils who arrested and persecuted Christians were enemies of God, and that the governments in dictatorships did not permit people to believe in and follow God, only allowing them to worship Buddha and the president and believe in the United Wa State Party. They made the people rely on their own two hands to create a good future, and change their fate through studying and earning money. Spreading God's gospel in a place like this will lead to persecution and obstacles. Here, those who believe in God and preach the gospel will be met with persecution, ridicule, beatings and scolding, and even imprisonment. But this is persecution for the sake of righteousness—this suffering is meaningful. If, when I am subjected to torture and ridiculed and humiliated, I feel that I have lost face and cannot look anyone in the eye, then my viewpoint on things is not right. I am a created being, and believing in and worshiping God is something that is perfectly natural and justified. Preaching the gospel and bearing witness to God is the mission and responsibility given to us by the Creator, and it is also the most just thing in all of mankind. To be subjected to persecution in the preaching of the gospel is not a humiliating matter—this is being persecuted for the sake of righteousness. It is like Job. When he faced trials, his family property was stolen by bandits, his children died, and he

developed ulcers all over his body. His friends ridiculed him, and even his wife told him to abandon God and die, but he prayed to God all along, extolling His name and standing firm in his testimony for Him. Peter was also subjected to persecution in his preaching of the gospel, and in the end, he was nailed upside down to the cross, but he did not feel that this was a humiliating thing. Quite the opposite, he thought that he was part of corrupt mankind and was not worthy of being nailed to the cross like the Lord Jesus, so he chose to be crucified upside down, bearing witness to God loud and clear. Their lives were the most meaningful lives; to be called righteous by God is the greatest honor. I also understood God's intention. I cared too much about my face, and I did not dare to do my duties out of fear of being humiliated. In arranging this kind of environment for me, God was allowing me to recognize and resolve my own corrupt disposition and erroneous point of view on things inside these environments. It was to perfect me and save me, and it also showed me that the government of the Wa people was a demon that hated the truth and resisted God, and that no matter how they persecuted and obstructed me, I could not yield to them. God is in charge of this world and of mankind, and my fate is in His hands. No country's government can change my fate or my future. I don't need to worry. No matter how hard it is, I will always follow God and stand firm in my testimony for Him. Once I recognized this, I felt that believing in God and all the suffering was worth it. I no longer was afraid of other people ridiculing and humiliating me, and when I went to get food, I didn't feel ashamed to look at others. I often prayed to God and felt that He was keeping me company, and each day I was happier than the last.

After half a month in confinement, it was discovered that I was infected with COVID-19, so they transferred me to the brigade headquarters for quarantine. When I was on my way to the headquarters, they treated me

even worse than a murderer. They put three shackles on my feet. The platoon leader and the others all ridiculed me: “Don’t you believe in God? Then how could you get COVID-19? You say that there’s a God, but there’s actually no God at all in the world.” When I heard these words, I didn’t feel that weak. No matter how the platoon leader and the others ridiculed me, and no matter how other people saw me, I was willing to submit. Then, the platoon leader said he was going to send me to be imprisoned in the security section. Fear welled up inside my heart, because the security section was very strict, and I was also worried about being humiliated in prison. Moreover, if I was in prison then I couldn’t go home. During that time, I was locked inside a room. I didn’t have my phone, and I could not read God’s words. There was a guitar there, and all I could do was play the guitar and sing hymns. I wanted very much to read God’s words, and I prayed to Him, begging Him to give me a way out. Several days later, I borrowed my brother Ivan’s phone and watched a film called My Story, Our Story. The brothers in the film were arrested by the Chinese Communist Party for believing in God and preaching the gospel. They were severely tortured and tormented, and many people humiliated them. They were sentenced to imprisonment and locked up for a number of years; some were kept for more than 10 years. They did not have any freedom, and they were overworked every day, but in jail they still were able to pray to God and pass around the words of God to each other. They had an attitude of submitting to God and knew that they were walking the correct path in life. They all had faith and stood firm in their testimony for God. I was especially moved when I heard them reading God’s words. I really admired them. They suffered so much and were still able to be steadfast in their faith, to follow God and never back out. But when I experienced the humiliation, beating and scolding of others, I couldn’t stand it. I was afraid

of being imprisoned, and lost my willpower as soon as I suffered a bit, wanting God to help me break free from such an environment. I felt that I owed God, and I hoped that God would give me one more chance. No matter how many years I was imprisoned, and no matter how great the humiliation, I would submit and face it. After I had quarantined for over 10 days, it happened to be time for those who came back from the front lines to take a scheduled month off. What I wasn't expecting was that the army also let me take this time off. One nonbelieving comrade said: "Look, Ayden made a mistake and he's in labor reform, but it turns out that his holiday came even earlier than ours." I was very grateful to God. I thought I would be locked up for several years, and I didn't expect that I could go on holiday and return home. I saw God's wondrous deeds, and I saw His almightiness and sovereignty. Before I left, the commander told me not to preach the gospel when I went home. I thought: "When I preached the gospel in the army, you controlled me and beat me. Now that I'm going home, I have such a good opportunity to bear witness to God—how could I miss it? I am going to invest all my energy into preaching the gospel; I won't let one little thing you say affect me." After I got home, I started to round up my brothers and sisters to go to a village and preach the gospel. At that time, there were 6 people who accepted God's work of the last days. More than 10 days after I returned to the army, the platoon leader transferred me to a position standing guard at a checkpoint. I was very grateful to God. Before, I was very busy in the army, and I didn't have much time to preach the gospel. After I arrived at this position, I wasn't so busy anymore, and I had more time for preaching the gospel. Even though the army's persecution never stopped, I still persisted in preaching the gospel and bearing witness for God, and brought more people before God to obtain His salvation.

In the course of preaching the gospel, although I suffered a bit, was subjected to humiliation and beatings and scolding, and was also placed in confinement, I saw my own corruption and my own lacking, as well as God's love. Whatever the circumstances I faced, each time God's words were there to guide me, to make me let go of my vanity and my face, and have the faith and strength to carry on. These experiences showed me firsthand that suffering and being persecuted in the name of preaching the gospel is a meaningful thing. To follow God, expend oneself for Him, and fulfill one's duty is the most meaningful life one can have.

3. Awakening From the Pursuit of Blessings

By An Jing, China

In 1994, my mother believed in the Lord Jesus. Within three months, her coronary heart disease was cured, which showed me God's almightiness and His blessing. I thought that as long as I believed in God earnestly, He would protect our family and keep us safe from illness and calamity. It was in this way that I followed my mother in believing in the Lord. From then on, I actively participated in gatherings, and I also saw the Lord's blessings when doing business; I was extremely grateful.

On June 1, 2002, I heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus' arrival, and found out that God returned to flesh to do the work of saving people one last time. I thought that I was so blessed, and that I must seize this final opportunity and diligently do my duty. That November, I abandoned my lumber business and invested all my time into doing my duty. I thought to myself, "As long as I believe in God sincerely, and as long as I rush about and expend myself for Him, He will bless me and make sure that everything goes well." Therefore, I busied myself from dawn till dusk in the church, always enjoying it and never tired. In 2012, I brought my son to God's house. After that, my son did his duty together with me in the church. I thought to myself: During these years, my son and I forsook everything and put all our time into expending ourselves for God; we would certainly gain God's protection and blessings. But just when I eagerly expended myself to receive greater blessings, a sudden incident shattered my dream of gaining blessings.

A little after 6 p.m. on October 17, 2020, I got a call from my son. He said in a downcast voice, "Mom, I've fallen ill, come quickly!" At the time, I didn't quite believe it, and I said, "When I saw you at noon you looked

fine; that was only a few hours ago, so how could you suddenly be ill?" My son said impatiently, "Mom, this illness is very serious! Come right away!" I hurried and took a taxi to where my son was. As soon as I entered the room, my son said, "Mom, I can't stand up. I have no feeling in my lower body." I saw my son, who was unable to move, and my mind went blank. The young brother who was next to him hurriedly said, "We have to get him to the hospital right away!" I then came back to my senses, and the young brother and I propped up my son and were about to go downstairs, but my son's legs were as soft as noodles, and he couldn't move a step. There was nothing we could do, so we called 911 and had him taken to the hospital. The doctor said, "These symptoms suggest Guillain-Barré syndrome, but this is not an easy illness to cure. Not long ago, a nurse from our hospital was diagnosed with this same illness. She spent 60 or 70 thousand yuan and it still wasn't cured; she still died." Hearing this was a total shock to me, and all at once, my legs became weak. I was extremely nervous, thinking, "How could my son suddenly come down with such a terrible illness? My son and I left home and came here to do our duties; how could something like this happen? Why didn't God protect us?" I didn't dare believe this fact. The doctor told us to go at once to a provincial hospital, since there would be a greater chance of curing the illness there. A ray of hope lit up my heart. But after I returned to my son's hospital room and saw him lying there, my heart clenched. Now, all I had was 20 thousand yuan; it wasn't enough to cure him! I couldn't help but blame God: I had been doing my duty away from home for so many years. I never said "No" to any duty that the church arranged for me. I expended myself like this; how could God let this happen to my son? I lay in bed, tossing and turning, unable to sleep. In my mind, I was thinking nonstop, "God won't let my son die, will He? Maybe this is a trial from God, and He is testing our faith? Perhaps my son

will be fine when the sun comes up?” I stayed up all night with my mind racing like this until the next day, when I quickly handed over my duty and took my son to the provincial hospital. After the doctor on duty examined my son’s condition, he said to me, “On the surface, the symptoms look like Guillain-Barré syndrome, but we have to wait until after we diagnose it the next day to fight the illness with medication. You have to pay close attention tonight; it’s easy for him to pass away if his breath gets stuck.” Hearing this, I was stunned. Would my son really be unable to escape death? I was truly afraid that my son wouldn’t make it through the night. The more I thought, the more scared I was, and I hurriedly prayed to God in silence, “God! Please save my son. You are almighty, and if You lend a hand, he won’t have to die. God, I won’t ask anything else of You; all I ask is that You protect my son and let him live....” After praying, my heart was slightly calmer. That night, I prayed to God nonstop, and I didn’t take my eyes off my son. Whenever I heard him panting heavily, I woke him up right away. I feared that he would suffocate. On the third morning, my son was diagnosed with acute transverse myelitis. The head doctor said, “If he doesn’t die, he could easily become a paraplegic or go into a vegetative state.” Hearing the doctor’s words, I was on the verge of a breakdown. I thought to myself, “If he becomes a paraplegic or a vegetable, wouldn’t the rest of his life be as good as over?” Then, the assigned doctor told me that using hormonal drugs would be very risky, and he had me sign an informed consent form. At the time, it felt like my hand was shaking. If I signed it, I feared that there would be after-effects from the medicine, and the remainder of my son’s life would be over. But if I didn’t sign it, that was tantamount to giving up on curing the illness and waiting for him to die. At the time, I was somewhat hesitant, and I thought in my mind, “God is almighty, and all matters are in His hands, including my son’s illness. I

should calm down and entrust all of this to God.” And so I signed the form. After my son was given the hormonal drugs, a bit of feeling returned to his legs and feet on the second day, and on the third day, he could move a little bit. I was extremely emotional, and I repeatedly thanked God in my heart. But what I hadn’t expected was that on the morning of the fourth day, I was passing my phone to my son, when his hand suddenly lost all strength and the phone fell onto the bed with a “thud.” Seeing this happen, I froze: What was going on? Why had it suddenly become more serious? I hurriedly called the doctor over, and the doctor said, “Your son’s condition is getting worse. If things go on like this, he very well may go into a vegetative state. You have to be prepared for this.” Hearing these words, it was like a bomb went off in my head. I thought to myself, “If he becomes a vegetable, isn’t he as good as dead?” I was terrified, and I hastened to pray to God in silence, “God, my son is still so young. For these few years, he has been doing his duty in the church all the time. Please protect him. I hand my son over to You; You decide whether he lives or dies.”

Later on, the danger to my son’s life dissipated, and the virus was under control. I saw hope and tearfully offered my gratitude to God in prayer. After things went on like this for half a month, the doctor suggested that we transfer to a rehabilitation center to recover his bodily functions. When we arrived at the rehabilitation center, the doctor said, “The best time for recovery from this illness is within the first three months. With the severity of your son’s illness, the probability of him standing again is low. If he isn’t able to stand within the next three months, he won’t ever stand again.” One day, I accompanied my son in his rehab training, and when I saw him lying paralyzed on the bed with an anxious look on his face, I felt even worse inside. I thought to myself, “I have believed in God with so much joy, and my only hope was that He can keep my son and me safe. I

never thought that my son would suddenly collapse and be unable to move, and now it's even uncertain whether he will be able to stand again. When will all this come to an end?" I thought of something that a sister had reminded me, "It is not by accident that your son suddenly suffered such a serious illness. Sometimes, God uses a certain circumstance to cleanse the corrupt disposition inside us." I thought about what exactly God's intention might be, and I picked up my phone and read a passage of God's words: **"So many believe in Me only that I might heal them. So many believe in Me only that I might use My powers to drive unclean spirits out from their bodies, and so many believe in Me simply that they might receive peace and joy from Me. So many believe in Me only to demand from Me greater material wealth. So many believe in Me just to spend this life in peace and to be safe and sound in the world to come. So many believe in Me to avoid the suffering of hell and to receive the blessings of heaven. So many believe in Me only for temporary comfort, yet do not seek to gain anything in the world to come. When I brought down My fury upon man and seized all the joy and peace he once possessed, man became doubtful. When I gave unto man the suffering of hell and reclaimed the blessings of heaven, man flew into a rage. When man asked Me to heal him, I paid him no heed and felt abhorrence toward him; man departed from Me to instead seek the way of evil medicine and sorcery. When I took away all that man had demanded from Me, everyone disappeared without a trace. Thus, I say that man has faith in Me because I give too much grace, and because there are far too many benefits to gain"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). Every word of God reverberated throughout my heart. He exposed that people's views in their belief in God are incorrect, that they all harbor their own intentions and aims. They make demands and requests of God in

order to gain grace and benefits from Him. I was precisely that kind of person. At the outset, I saw that after my mother began believing in the Lord, her serious coronary heart disease was cured. Only after I saw God's blessings with my own eyes did I begin to believe in God and forsake and expend myself for Him. I also wanted God to protect me, keep me safe, and make sure everything went well. Regardless of whether it was an illness, a calamity, or any difficulty that I encountered, I always cried out for God's help. I had treated God as a shelter. After accepting God's work of the last days, I was even more willing to rush about and expend myself for Him, thinking that if I pursued like this, I would certainly receive greater blessings from God. But when my son came down with a serious illness and faced paralysis or even death, I couldn't accept it, and I complained about God, reasoned with Him, and kept score with Him. I calculated how much I had expended myself in the past, and used this as capital to demand that God cure my son's illness, taking it for granted that He would do it. I was just like those religious people who regarded themselves as babies in God's hands; I regarded God as a God who responded to people's every plea and only bestowed grace and blessings upon people. As long as I demanded something of Him, He was supposed to satisfy me. Even though I followed Almighty God, was my way of believing not the same as those religious people? It's like in the Age of Grace, when the Lord Jesus fed those five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. These people only wanted to receive benefits from God. They did not know God, and were never interested in the truths He expressed or the work He did. God only satisfied their fleshly needs and did not preach more to them. What God does in the last days is not the work of healing the sick and casting out demons, but rather of expressing truths to judge and purify people, getting them to cast off their corruption and attain God's salvation. But I had been believing in

God for all these years just to receive blessings and benefits. This kind of pursuit ran counter to God's work, so how could I be saved? At this time, I understood that my son's illness was permitted by God, that it was meant to help me seek and enter the truth. However, I didn't understand God's work, and I didn't seek God's intention to gain the truth, only wanting Him to protect and bless my son to cure his illness as soon as possible. I was the same as those religious people who sought bread to satisfy hunger; wasn't I behaving just like a disbeliever? I could not unreasonably make demands of God any longer. No matter the extent to which my son's condition developed, I was willing to submit and experience God's work.

Going forward, my son had to do six types of rehab training every day. Each time he finished one, he would be sweating profusely. After around half a month, some feeling returned to both his arms and legs. I saw the light at the end of the tunnel, and every day I was hoping for a miracle to occur, hoping that one day my son could stand again. But things didn't turn out how I imagined. One day, I was accompanying my son during his training, and he defecated in his pants. Back then, seeing such a scene was extremely upsetting. Although my son's life was no longer in danger, he still wore a urinary pouch and diaper every day. Living like this was too painful! My son was only just over 30, still so young; how could he carry on like this in the future? I felt despondent in my heart, and so I went before God and silently prayed to Him, "God! If my son can't take care of himself, how will he get by in the future? God, I believe in Your power. If my son can stand again, I will absolutely work harder and do my duty diligently." But then I realized that such prayer didn't align with God's intention, so I self-reflecting. I had said that I was willing to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, so why had I made a demand to God yet again? At this time, I remembered a passage of God's words, so I sought it out to read.

God says: “You long for God to delight in you, yet you are far from God. What is the matter here? You accept only His words, but not His pruning, much less are you able to accept His every arrangement, to have complete faith in Him. What, then, is the matter here? In the final analysis, your faith is an empty eggshell, one that could never produce a chick. For your faith has not brought you the truth or given you the life, but has instead given you an illusory sense of sustenance and hope. It is this sense of sustenance and hope that is your aim in believing in God, not the truth and the life. Thus do I say that the course of your faith in God has been none other than trying to curry the favor of God through servility and shamelessness, and can in no way be deemed true faith. How could a chick be born of faith such as this? In other words, what can faith such as this accomplish? The purpose of your faith in God is to use Him to achieve your own aims. Is this not further a fact of your offense against the disposition of God?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth). After reading God’s words, I felt my cheeks burning. These words made me feel like God was judging me face-to-face. When the doctor said that my son’s illness was unlikely to be cured, I had placed all my hope in God, speaking pleasant-sounding words to curry favor with and fawn on Him. When God protected my son and brought him back from death’s edge, I thanked Him joyously. When my son had held onto life, but then he was faced with paralysis or entering a vegetative state, I demanded that God prevent my son from becoming a vegetable again, even greedily requesting to God that if He enabled my son to take care of himself, I would certainly do my duty diligently to repay His love. I saw that my shameless currying favor with God was all for the sake of achieving my own goals. I was truly so despicable! I thought of God in the same way I thought of corrupt mankind, thinking He liked words of

flattery. I thought that as long as I spoke some nice words, God would be happy and then give me benefits, and my son's illness would be cured. God is holy and faithful, and what He wants is for people to use their hearts and their honesty to worship Him, to regard Him with a sincere heart, yet I had flattered and curried favor with God for the sake of my personal goals. This was something that God detested. This time, I had experienced God's painstaking intentions firsthand. If He hadn't arranged such circumstances, I never would have seen that my belief for all these years was just to gain safety and blessings. Even if I believed in God like this for a lifetime, I would never gain the truth and life. For me, these circumstances were a tremendous salvation and showing of mercy. Recognizing this, I shed tears of indebtedness and self-reproach. I regretted that I had so greatly rebelled against, curried favor with, and used God; I hadn't treated Him as God. However, God did not treat me according to what I did, and used His words to guide me to understand His intention. At this time, I was even more ashamed to have received God's love and salvation. I prayed silently to God, "God, regardless of whether my son can take care of himself in the future, I am willing to submit, to seek the truth and experience Your words and work, and to learn a lesson from these circumstances."

One day, as I accompanied my son during his training, I unconsciously began to look back on all the memories of my faith in God: When my mother's severe coronary heart disease was cured, I demanded blessings from the Lord. When I did business, I also hoped that the Lord would make everything go smoothly. After I accepted this stage of God's work, I forsook and expended a bit, but it was still for the sake of demanding grace and blessings from Him. Then, I remembered a passage of God's words: **"Man's disposition has become supremely vicious, his sense has grown supremely dull, and his conscience has been completely trampled by**

the evil one and long ago ceased to be the original conscience of man. Man is not only ungrateful to God incarnate for bestowing so much life and grace upon mankind, but has even become resentful toward God for giving him the truth; it is because man has not the slightest interest in the truth that he has grown resentful toward God. Not only is man unable to lay down his life for God incarnate, but he also tries to extract favors from Him, and claims an interest that is dozens of times greater than what man has given to God. People of such conscience and sense think this is no great matter, and still believe that they have expended so much of themselves for God, and that God has given them too little. There are people who, having given Me a bowl of water, hold out their hands and demand I pay them for two bowls of milk, or, having given Me a room for one night, demand I pay rent for several. With such a humanity and such a conscience, how could you still wish to gain life? What contemptible wretches you are! This sort of humanity in man and this sort of conscience in man are what cause God incarnate to wander across the land, with no place to find shelter. Those who are truly possessed of conscience and humanity should worship and wholeheartedly serve God incarnate not because of how much work He has done, but even if He were to do no work at all. This is what should be done by those who are of sound sense, and it is the duty of man. Most people even speak of conditions in their service to God: They do not care whether He is God or man, and they only talk of their own conditions, and only seek to satisfy their own desires. When you cook for Me, you demand a service fee, when you run for Me, you ask for running fees, when you work for Me you demand work fees, when you wash My clothes you demand laundry fees, when you provide for the church you demand recuperation costs, when you speak you

demand speaker's fees, when you give out books you demand distribution fees, and when you write you demand writing fees. Those I have pruned even demand recompense from Me, while those who have been sent home demand reparations for the damage to their name; those who are unmarried demand a dowry, or compensation for their lost youth; those who kill a chicken demand butcher's fees, those who fry food demand frying fees, and those who make soup demand payment for that, too.... This is your lofty and mighty humanity, and these are the actions your warm conscience dictates. Where is your sense? Where is your humanity? Let Me tell you! If you carry on like this, I will cease to work among you. I will not work among a pack of beasts in human attire, I will not suffer thus for such a group of people whose fair faces hide feral hearts, I will not endure for such a pack of animals that has not the slightest possibility of salvation. The day I turn My back on you is the day you die, it is the day that darkness comes upon you, and the day that you are forsaken by the light. Let Me tell you! I will never be benevolent to a group such as yours, a group which is beneath even animals! There are limits to My words and actions, and with your humanity and conscience as they are, I will do no more work, for you are too lacking in conscience, you have caused Me too much pain, and your despicable behavior disgusts Me too much. People who are so lacking in humanity and conscience will never have a chance at salvation; I would never save such heartless and ungrateful people” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). Before, when I read this passage of God's words, I never held it up to myself for comparison and even looked down on these people. I thought that people who made demands of and settled scores with God must have so little humanity! Reading these words today, my cheeks felt hot. It

was as if I had been slapped; it was very humiliating. Was I not this exact kind of person? After I started believing in God, I had believed that God would keep my family safe and free from disaster. I forsook everything to gain greater blessings; whatever duty I did, I did it willingly, and I believed that since I expended myself, God should give me grace and blessings, and He had to satisfy all of my demands. I turned doing my duty as a created being into capital for making demands of God, and the blessings even had to be dozens of times greater than what I expended. When my son fell ill, I calculated how much I had expended over these years, and believed that God would certainly cure this illness for my son. I also greedily demanded that God produce a miracle to let my son stand again and take care of himself. I thought that as long as I believed in God, He would have to care for me and satisfy all of my demands. Otherwise, God would be unrighteous. It was in this way that I shamelessly coerced God and made demands of Him with bold assuredness. I truly lacked all humanity and reason. I thought of Paul during the Age of Grace, who endured considerable suffering while preaching the gospel but did not pursue the truth or pursue dispositional change. He turned suffering, paying a price, and working hard into a condition and a kind of capital for entering the kingdom of heaven, demanding a crown of righteousness from God. He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Paul believed that if God did not grant him this crown, then God was unrighteous. He was publicly clamoring against God, and as a result, he offended God's disposition and was punished. Was the path I was following not precisely the same as Paul's? It was the path of not pursuing the truth or dispositional change and only pursuing gaining grace and blessings from God. I saw that I used my years of forsaking, expending, and

working hard, as well as my son abandoning his youth and giving up on marriage after believing in God to do duty as capital to coerce God. When God didn't satisfy my desires, I questioned Him, was hostile to Him, and clamored against Him. I was truly too shameless! The more I reflected, the more I realized that my behavior had offended God's disposition and triggered His fury. I was scared; if I still did not repent, I would certainly meet God's punishment as Paul did. I hastily prayed to God and repented, "God, during these years, I have not worshipped You sincerely. I always regarded You as an object to be used and asked You to satisfy my desire for blessings. I am truly so despicable! God! I am willing to repent to You. No matter whether my son lives or dies, or whether he is paralyzed, I will no longer complain about You, and I am willing to submit to all circumstances that You orchestrate and act as a created being with reason and humanity to repay Your love and comfort Your heart!"

After this, I said to my son, "Let's correct our mindsets and take things as they come. We can't demand that God cure your illness, so let's learn the lesson of submission. Even if you become paralyzed and can never stand again, we must not complain." He said, "You're right. When people are born and when they die is all in God's hands. He has already determined this; I am willing to submit to Him!" After that, my son and I were no longer in such pain, and no longer did I demand that God make my son get better faster. We experienced things as they came. Unexpectedly, before too long, my son's illness started improving day by day. One day, my son was going back and forth in his wheelchair in the hallway like he always had. I was a bit sleepy at the time, so I went into the room to rest for a while. I had just laid down when I heard someone shouting loudly from the hallway, saying, "Look at that, that man just stood up!" When I heard this shout, I pushed open the door and looked, and it turned out that it was my son who

had stood up. It was like I was dreaming; I couldn't believe the scene before my eyes. In my heart, I said repeatedly, "God! Thank You, God! I praise You! My son being able to stand is due to Your power; it is Your deed!" Gradually, my son was able to control his urination and defecation, and he could even go to the restroom on his own in a wheelchair. One day, the family member of a patient said enviously to me, "My child and your son have the same illness. We've spent over one million yuan, and he still hasn't stood up!" I thought to myself, "That my son can stand up today is God's deed, and only God has this kind of power!" Someone also said, "Your child is truly one in a million, being able to recover from this illness to such an extent. You are really lucky!" I smiled and nodded, and repeatedly thanked God in my heart! Several days later, we checked out of the hospital and went back home.

I've now been following Almighty God for twenty-one years. Thinking back, God brought me through this process step-by-step. It was just that I was too rebellious and attached additional conditions to my faith in God. I made transactions with God in order to gain grace and blessings. If God had not used my son's illness to reveal me and shatter my dream of gaining blessings, I would not have recognized this fallacious view in my faith in God. I saw that my purpose in believing in God was so ugly, so despicable! Experiencing this work from God has made me feel that my son's illness was a tremendous salvation for us. God's love lies not only in grace and blessings; rather, His true love lies in illness and pain, judgment and chastisement, and trials and refinement, which is all to purify and change me. My son's illness also allowed me to experience God's righteous, beautiful, and good essence. Now, my son's body has recovered quite well. I think of how my son was sentenced to death by the doctor, and now he can not only take care of himself but can also help me do some work. This is

something that I hadn't dared to hope for. I see that God holds sovereignty over and arranges all things, that the authority over man's life and death rests in His hands, and that He is in charge of everything. Thanks be to God for His salvation!

4. I No Longer Feel Inferior Because of My Clumsy Speech

By Kerry, the Philippines

From a young age, I was relatively introverted and expressed myself poorly. When interacting with strangers, I didn't have much courage to speak, and when I was around a lot of people, I felt very nervous. I was always afraid that I wouldn't express myself clearly and would make a fool of myself. Because of this, I often felt inferior to others. In August of 2023, the church arranged for me to water newcomers. Doing this duty required me to frequently gather with newcomers, and I also had to communicate with the other waterers. Facing such situations, I frequently felt nervous, and feared that when it was my turn to fellowship, I wouldn't speak clearly, and then what would the brothers and sisters think of me?

One time, Stacy, the sister I was partnered with, took me to gather with newcomers. There were as many as 40 or 50 people there. When I saw this scene, I couldn't help but get nervous. There were way too many people. How disgraceful would it be to fellowship poorly in front of this crowd? They would think, "If you're like this, not even speaking understandably, can you really water us?" Wouldn't they look down on me? Thinking of this, I couldn't calm down, and my heart was very agitated. Especially when I saw that in Stacy's fellowship, her thinking was clear and the content was practical, I was very envious. I was also very anxious, and I feared that with so many people there, as soon as I got nervous, my mind would go blank and I wouldn't be able to fellowship anything. How embarrassing would that be? What would the newcomers think of me? Thinking of this, I decided that I wasn't going to speak. I would just play the role of auditor! So, the whole gathering passed without my saying a

single word. When I gathered together with other waterers, I was also like this. Seeing that all of them were relatively good at expressing themselves, I became envious. Thinking that my self-expression was unsatisfactory and unpresentable to the public, I was even less confident with my speaking. I was very depressed, and thought, “We are all doing watering duties, so how can the gap between us be so big? I never say anything; won’t they think that I cannot fellowship at all and that I’m a real disappointment?” I was a bit negative, and even thought, “Back when it was arranged for me to do watering duties, wasn’t that a mistake? To do this duty, one must be able to fellowship on the truth and be good at expressing themselves. I’m so ineloquent that I’m afraid I can’t do this duty.” But I thought then that which duty someone does at which stage is determined by God, and I didn’t want to be unworthy of His painstaking intention. But I would often have to speak in front of many people in the future; what should I do? For those few days, every day I was living in suffering, and I couldn’t escape from this mood.

One day, I talked to a sister about my state, and she had me read a passage of God’s words. Almighty God says: **“If you often have a sense of accusation in your life, if your heart can find no rest, if you are without peace or joy, and are often beset by worry and anxiety about all kinds of things, what does this demonstrate? Merely that you do not practice the truth, do not stand firm in your testimony to God. When you live amid the disposition of Satan, you are liable to often fail to practice the truth, to betray the truth, to be selfish and vile; you only uphold your image, your name and status, and your interests. Always living for yourself brings you great pain. You have so many selfish desires, entanglements, fetters, misgivings, and vexations that you do not have the least peace or joy. To live for the sake of corrupted flesh is to suffer**

excessively. Those who pursue the truth are different. The more they understand the truth, the more free and liberated they become; the more they practice the truth, the more they have peace and joy. When they obtain the truth, they will live completely in the light, enjoy God's blessings, and have no pain at all" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Begins With the Performance of Duty). God's words had exposed my true state, and I understood why I had been in such pain during this time. It was because I was always living in a state of vanity and pride and not practicing the truth. No matter whether I was gathering with newcomers or communicating with waterers, I didn't dare to truly express myself, and was always afraid that others would look down on me if I fellowshiped poorly. I thought over and over and was full of worries about my own vanity and pride, and all I thought about was my pride and my interests. I was only in unbearable pain because I spent all day living in my corrupt disposition. By reading God's words, I gained some understanding of my problem.

A few days later, the supervisor said that from then on, we would take turns leading the communication between waterers. Hearing these words, I couldn't help but get nervous again, thinking, "Now, I'm facing the brothers and sisters who do the same duty as me. There are 11 of them altogether. My fellowshiping on truths regarding vision is already not as good as theirs, and now I'll even be in charge of gatherings. With my inability to express myself, if I get nervous when it comes time to fellowship and I stammer and stutter and my thinking is unclear, then what will everyone think of me?" A few days later, it was the day of a gathering, and the supervisor called me and urged me to participate. Even though I wasn't leading the gathering, I still struggled internally. I was afraid that if I went and was asked to fellowship, I wouldn't be able to say anything, and that it

would be the greatest humiliation, so I didn't have the courage to participate. For several days after that, I felt like I had a rock stuck in my heart and couldn't breathe. Even though I had avoided that day, would I be able to keep avoiding it forever? I thought that maybe I truly was not suited to do watering duties, but when I thought of giving up, I felt reproached, and felt that I owed God. Only when I read these words of God did my state reverse course. God says: **"Some people have been introverted since childhood, not fond of talking, and struggle to socialize. Even as adults in their thirties or forties, they still can't overcome this personality: They aren't adept at speech or conversation, nor are they good at interaction. After they become a leader, this personality trait becomes a certain limitation and hindrance in their work and often causes them distress and frustration, so that they feel constrained. Introversion and reluctance to speak are manifestations of normal humanity. Since they are manifestations of normal humanity, are they considered transgressions to God? No, they are not transgressions, and God will treat them correctly. Regardless of your problems, shortcomings, or flaws, none of these are issues in God's eyes. God looks at how you seek the truth, practice the truth, act according to the truth principles, and follow God's way under the inherent conditions of normal humanity—these are what God looks at. Therefore, in matters that touch upon the truth principles, do not let the basic conditions such as normal human caliber, instincts, personality, habits, and living patterns restrict you. Of course, do not invest your energy and time in trying to overcome these basic conditions either, nor attempt to change them. ... Whatever your original personality has been, that remains your personality. Do not try to change your personality for the sake of attaining salvation; this is a fallacious idea—whatever personality you have, that is an**

objective fact that you cannot change. In terms of objective reasons for this, the result that God wants to achieve in His work has nothing to do with your personality. Whether you can attain salvation is also unrelated to your personality. In addition, whether you are a person who practices the truth and has the truth reality has nothing to do with your personality. Therefore, do not try to change your personality because you are doing certain duties or in charge of certain tasks—this is an erroneous idea. What should you do then? Regardless of your personality or inherent conditions, you should adhere to and practice the truth principles. Ultimately, God does not measure whether you follow His way or can attain salvation based on your personality; God does not consider what inherent caliber, abilities, talents, gifts, or skills you possess, and of course He also does not evaluate how much you have restrained your bodily instincts and needs. Instead, God looks at whether, while following God and doing your duties, you are practicing and experiencing His words, whether you have the intention and resolve to pursue the truth, and ultimately, whether you have achieved practicing the truth and following God’s way. This is what God looks at. Do you understand this? (Yes, I understand.)” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). Reading God’s words, I was very touched, and I felt somewhat liberated. I understood that God didn’t want to change people’s instincts and personalities, but rather their corrupt dispositions. Personality defects are manifestations of normal humanity which God does not condemn. I had always had a certain view; I thought that I was introverted and bad at expressing myself, and that I wasn’t suited to do watering duties. Whenever I encountered extroverted people who expressed themselves well, it would feel like I was being constrained, and I was always afraid of what people would think of me if I expressed myself

poorly. I felt inferior and was shy, feeling even more that I could not do this duty. It turns out that this was a distorted view of mine. Thinking of when I did other duties in the past, at the time, I had diligently tried to ponder God's words, and when diligently doing my duty, I could achieve some results. When gathering and fellowshiping, I also gained some enlightenment and illumination. Even though I couldn't express myself as well as others, it wasn't that I couldn't express anything clearly at all. In fact, what God had given me was enough. It was mainly that I had been constrained by vanity and pride, and feared that if I fellowshiped poorly, I'd make a fool of myself. I also always used my introversion and being bad with words as an excuse, and didn't contemplate how I should resolve these difficulties in my duty, let alone reflect on my corrupt disposition. I lived inside my vanity and pride, unable to escape. God's words made me understand that my approach to resolving problems was wrong, and I shouldn't always feel inferior and negative because I was introverted and not good at expressing myself, because one's personality is determined by God and cannot be changed, and it is not a corrupt disposition. All I could do was pursue the truth, resolve my corrupt disposition, and no longer be constrained by vanity and pride. This way, I would be relaxed and free. Later, I practiced according to God's words, and acknowledged and faced my personality defects. In areas in which I was up to the task, I did my best to take action, and in those in which I wasn't up to par, I worked with the sisters I was partnered with and learned from them to make up for my weaknesses. I no longer felt inferior and sad because I was introverted and not good with words.

Later, when I talked about my state with a sister, she had me read a passage of God's words. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists' cherishment of their reputation and status goes beyond that of normal people, and is**

something within their disposition essence; it is not a temporary interest, or the transient effect of their surroundings—it is something within their life, their bones, and so it is their essence. This is to say that in everything antichrists do, their first consideration is their own reputation and status, nothing else. For antichrists, reputation and status are their life, and their lifelong goal. In all they do, their first consideration is: ‘What will happen to my status? And to my reputation? Will doing this give me a good reputation? Will it elevate my status in people’s minds?’ That is the first thing they think about, which is ample proof that they have the disposition and essence of antichrists; they would not consider these problems otherwise. It can be said that for antichrists, reputation and status are not some additional requirement, much less something extraneous that they could do without. They are part of the nature of antichrists, they are in their bones, in their blood, they are innate to them. Antichrists are not indifferent toward whether they possess reputation and status; this is not their attitude. Then, what is their attitude? Reputation and status are intimately connected to their daily lives, to their daily state, to what they pursue on a daily basis. And so for antichrists, status and reputation are their life. No matter how they live, no matter what environment they live in, no matter what work they do, no matter what they pursue, what their goals are, what their life’s direction is, it all revolves around having a good reputation and a high status. And this aim does not change; they can never put aside such things. This is the true face of antichrists, and their essence” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God exposed that what antichrists care about most is their reputation and status. They see reputation and status as even more important than their own lives. Thinking back, I also had this kind of state.

In reality, when gathering with the newcomers, all I had to do was attentively ponder God's words and fellowship on the parts that I was able to understand. However, I didn't do this. When I saw the newcomers, I wasn't concentrating on pondering God's words or on how to resolve the newcomers' problems, but rather on how to fellowship so that I left a good image of myself in their hearts. When I thought of what others would think of me if I expressed myself and fellowshiped poorly, my heart became constrained and I didn't dare to fellowship. It was also like this when I gathered and communicated with the waterers. When I saw that they all expressed themselves better than I did, I didn't think about learning from and communicating with them to make up for my weaknesses, but rather I thought of what they'd think of me when I expressed myself and fellowshiped poorly. When I didn't say anything, I was also worried about what they'd think of me. Once I was constrained by the shackles of vanity and pride to a certain extent, I didn't quickly seek the truth to resolve matters, but rather feared being seen through by others. I would have rather not done this duty than have people call me a good-for-nothing. This way, at least I could preserve my last shred of dignity. I saw that no matter whether I was speaking or silent, and no matter which group of people I was with, wherever I was, I was only considering my own vanity and pride. The pain, negativity, and inferiority that I felt today, was all because of my vanity and pride. It was caused by my inability to show my face around people, and I even wanted to give up on my duty because I couldn't satisfy my pride. I thought of how when I was young, my parents would often tell me that "Face is priceless." Being influenced by this sort of satanic poison, no matter who I was interacting with, I always wanted to make a good impression on them, and if I didn't get them to think highly of me, I at least couldn't let them look down on me. I was like this whether I was with

people from school, from work, or from my duty, and when my need for reputation and status could not be satisfied, it was like I had lost my life. I saw that what I had revealed was the disposition of antichrists. Recognizing this much, I also understood that there was God's painstaking intention behind His determining this kind of personality for me. I read these words of God: **"After being corrupted by Satan, people possess Satan's corrupt disposition as their life's essence; that is, they live by their corrupt disposition, and their lives are governed by that corrupt disposition. If, in addition to this, someone possesses good caliber, extraordinary caliber, and complete, perfect, and wonderful abilities in all areas, it only fosters their corrupt disposition, and leads to the rampant escalation of that corrupt disposition, making it uncontrollable. As a result, they become more arrogant, intransigent, deceitful, and wicked. The difficulty of their accepting the truth increases, and there is no way to resolve their corrupt disposition"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (7)). Reading God's words, I understood that if I was articulate, very good at expressing myself, and able to easily control all sorts of situations, being the center of attention and held in esteem by others, then I would certainly be pleased with myself and delirious with joy. It is only because I am not skilled at expressing myself, that I am able to rely on and look to God in the midst of difficulties, as well as see my own weaknesses and incompetencies, my insignificance and ineloquence, and therefore, not dare to be too haughty. I was so obsessed with reputation and status, yet I was inarticulate and bad at expressing myself. I had such great flaws but cared so much about what others thought of me. If I were a smooth talker, I would only become increasingly arrogant. God hugely protected me by not giving me the skill of being a good talker!

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Pursuing the truth is the most important thing, no matter from which perspective you view it. You can avoid the defects and deficiencies of humanity, but you can never evade the path of pursuing the truth. Regardless of how perfect or noble your humanity may be, or whether you have fewer flaws and defects, and possess more strengths, than other people, this does not signify that you understand the truth, nor can it replace your pursuit of the truth. On the contrary, if you pursue the truth, understand a lot of the truth, and have an adequately deep and practical understanding of it, this will compensate for many defects and problems in your humanity"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). **"If everything you think about during your available hours each day has to do with how to resolve your corrupt disposition, how to practice the truth, and how to understand the truth principles, then you will learn to use the truth to resolve your problems according to God's words. You will thus gain the ability to live independently, you will have life entry, you will face no great difficulties in following God, and gradually, you will enter into the truth reality. If, in your heart, you are still fixated on prestige and status, still preoccupied with showing off and making others look up to you, then you are not someone who pursues the truth, and you are walking down the wrong path. What you pursue is not the truth, nor is it the life, but the things that you love, it is fame, gain, and status—in which case, nothing you do relates to the truth, it is all evildoing, and laboring. If, in your heart, you love the truth, and always strive for the truth, if you pursue dispositional change, are able to achieve true submission to God, and can fear God and shun evil, and if you are restrained in everything you do, and are able to accept God's scrutiny, then your state will keep improving, and you will be someone who lives**

before God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Good Behavior Does Not Mean One’s Disposition Has Changed). From God’s words, I understood that those who do not pursue the truth, no matter how well they express themselves, how smooth a talker they are, or how many people think highly of them, will not be approved of by God. God does not look at what people’s deficiencies are, but rather at whether they can pursue the truth, submit to Him, and fear Him. In my performance of the duty of watering newcomers, God’s intention was for me to pursue the truth while doing my duty, for me to fulfill my responsibility regardless of whether I was facing the newcomers or the waterers, and at the same time, for me to seek how I ought to resolve the newcomers’ difficulties and issues in order for them to lay down a foundation on the true way and do their duties as created beings sooner. However, when I came before the newcomers and the waterers, what I thought of every day was my own vanity and status. This was the complete opposite of the path God speaks of that people who pursue and love the truth walk. This way, I would only grow increasingly further from God’s demands, and He would ultimately eliminate me. From then on, according to what God’s words said, I began to consciously train myself to put my heart into my duty and into resolving my own corrupt disposition, focusing on seeking the truth principles and doing my duty well. Later, when we took turns being in charge of gatherings, I no longer chose to evade. I knew that by leading the gatherings, I could train and improve my self-expression, make up for what I lacked, and do my duty well, and so I asked God to give me faith and strength. I wouldn’t focus on what others thought of me; it would be enough for me to give free rein to what God gave me originally, and to what I can achieve myself. When it was my turn to fellowship, I calmly fellowshiped on what I understood, and also

expressed some things that I hadn't prepared to; I was no longer constrained by my face.

Experiencing this, I knew that it was not being ineloquent that made me depressed and in pain, but rather my pursuit of reputation and status. Being inarticulate and expressing oneself poorly is a shortcoming of humanity, but it is not a deadly illness. Putting one's heart into pursuing the truth and seeking the truth principles when encountering problems or difficulties in the performance of one's duty; this is the most crucial thing.

5. Is “Being Strict With Yourself and Tolerant of Others” Truly a Virtue?

By Li Jia, China

Before, I always thought that I should be tolerant and generous to others, be considerate of their feelings and understand their difficulties. I would rather inconvenience myself than inconvenience others because I thought that's what generous, magnanimous people of good character did. Later on, when I began supervising video production, I felt that as a team leader, I had to set a good example and take a leading role, I had very high standards for myself, and felt I shouldn't be too exacting and strict with other team members, as this was the kind and generous thing to do. Everyone would feel that I had great humanity, was understanding and would have a good impression of me. So I personally did as much work as I could for the group, and if the work assigned to others was too hard and they weren't willing to do it, I would just do it myself. I tried as much as possible not to pressure others to avoid them saying that my demands were too high and I was too strict. Even though I'd sometimes think I was taking on too much work and it was too demanding, I would still rebel against my flesh and take on the work as much as I could to avoid others developing poor opinions of me. Later on, some new members joined our group, they were unfamiliar with the work and lacked professional skills, so I had to look over all the videos they produced. Sometimes they would also seek me out to talk through issues they couldn't see clearly. Just this work alone filled up my entire schedule, but I had other work to do on top of that. Tasks started piling up in no time, and I was completely overwhelmed with work every day. Sometimes when they would ask me to help them resolve very basic issues, I'd think to myself, “You could easily resolve this issue

yourselves through discussion, why do you have to come to me to resolve everything?” But then I would think, “Given they did ask me, if I reject their request, it will seem like I’m being irresponsible. After all, it will take them time to discuss the matter as well. Forget it, I guess I can find time to deal with it myself.” And with that, I’d agree. Afterward, I realized that a sister was just passing her work onto me out of laziness and a fear of responsibility. At first I thought about fellowshipping with her, but then I worried she’d think I was asking too much, so I thought better of it. Sometimes when I’d notice that others didn’t seem to have much work while I had several urgent matters to attend to and was overwhelmed, I’d want to delegate some work so that we could keep ahead of schedule. But after thinking it over, I just couldn’t get myself to ask them. I thought to myself, “If I increase their workload, won’t they think I’m too demanding and don’t allow them any leisure time? Forget it, I better do it myself.” But while doing the work I felt it was a bit unfair. Especially when I saw them relaxing while I worked, I felt even more resentful and blamed them for their lack of burden. They somehow didn’t see how much work there was to be done. But I just whined to myself and didn’t say anything out loud, worried that if I said something I would appear to have bad humanity and be ungenerous. So, no matter how busy I was, I would try to do as much as I could on my own. Sometimes, when I would assign work based upon the group’s schedule, if they responded well it would be fine, but if they looked unhappy or complained, I would feel hesitant to assign work to them and would just work through the night to get everything done myself. In actuality, I would feel like it was unfair while working and would be full of resentment. I felt like that was clearly their work, and yet I had to spend extra time to get it done and would sometimes be so busy that I had no time for devotionals. But I didn’t dare express any of these grievances aloud. So

I just resignedly comforted myself saying, “It’s best to be generous and considerate, to care for others and not be so petty, otherwise it will seem like I have poor character.” Later on, the brothers and sisters on my team all said I had a burden toward duty, able to undergo suffering and pay a price, and was loving and considerate of others. Upon hearing these appraisals, I felt that even though I’d undergone suffering, it was all worth it to get this high praise from everyone. But because I did not act on principle, continually pandered to others’ flesh and assigned work in an unreasonable fashion, work began to pile up and our progress as a team was slow. Some of the brothers and sisters were lazy, unmotivated, and satisfied just to get their own work done. Others didn’t pray to God or seek truth principles when they had issues, preferring to rely on me and wait for me to resolve their issues, which led to them failing to progress in their skills.

One day, our supervisor came to check up on our work and found that work was not being assigned reasonably. He said that some of the work could be assigned to team members and that I should spend more time doing my own work as a team leader, including checking on work progress and resolving any issues on skills that cropped up. In this way, everyone could shoulder some responsibility and bear a burden. I knew he was right and that this way of assigning was beneficial for the work. Yet, I thought that practicing in this way was just too difficult, and so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to gain knowledge of my corrupt disposition. During devotionals, I looked for words of God relevant to my current state. One passage left a deep impression on me: **“Be strict with yourself and tolerant of others,” as with sayings about ‘Don’t pocket the money you pick up’ and ‘Derive pleasure from helping others,’ is one of those demands that traditional culture makes regarding people’s moral conduct. By the same token, regardless of whether someone can attain**

or exercise this moral conduct, it is still not the standard or norm for measuring their humanity. It may be that you really are capable of being strict with yourself and tolerant of others, and that you hold yourself to particularly high standards. You may be squeaky clean and you may always think of others and show consideration for them, without being selfish and seeking after your own interests. You may seem particularly magnanimous and selfless, and have a strong sense of social responsibility and social morals. Your noble personality and qualities may be on display to those close to you, and to those you encounter and interact with. Your behavior may never give others any reason to blame or criticize you, eliciting instead profuse praise and even admiration. People may regard you as someone who is truly strict with themselves and tolerant of others. However, these are nothing more than external behaviors. Are the thoughts and wishes deep in your heart consistent with these external behaviors, with these actions that you live out externally? The answer is no, they are not. The reason you can act in this way is that there is a motive behind it. What is that motive, exactly? Could you bear for that motive to see the light of day? Certainly not. This proves that this motive is something unmentionable, something dark and evil. Now, why is this motive unspeakable and evil? It is because people's humanity is governed and driven by their corrupt dispositions. All the thoughts of humanity, regardless of whether people put them into words or pour them forth, are undeniably dominated, controlled, and manipulated by their corrupt dispositions. As a result, people's motives and intents are all sinister and evil. Regardless of whether people are able to be strict with themselves and tolerant of others, or whether or not they outwardly express this moral perfectly, it is inevitable that this moral will have no control or influence over their

humanity. So, what does control people's humanity? It is their corrupt dispositions, it is their humanity essence that lies obscured beneath the moral 'Be strict with yourself and tolerant of others'—that is their true nature. A person's true nature is their humanity essence. And what does their humanity essence consist of? It mainly consists of their preferences, what they pursue, their outlook on life and their value system, as well as their attitude toward the truth and God, and so on. Only these things truly represent people's humanity essence. It can be said with certainty that most of the people who require themselves to fulfill the moral of being 'strict with yourself and tolerant of others,' are obsessed with status. Driven by their corrupt dispositions, they cannot help but pursue prestige among men, social prominence, and status in the eyes of others. All of these things are related to their desire for status, and are pursued under the cover of their good moral conduct. And how do these pursuits of theirs come about? They entirely come from and are driven by their corrupt dispositions. So, no matter what, whether someone fulfills the moral of being 'strict with yourself and tolerant of others' or not, and whether or not they do so to perfection, this cannot change their humanity essence at all. By implication, this means that it cannot in any way change their outlook on life or their value system, or guide their attitudes and perspectives on all manner of people, events, and things. Isn't that the case? (It is.) The more that someone is capable of being strict with themselves and tolerant of others, the better they are at putting on an act, disguising themselves, and at misleading others with good behavior and pleasing words, and the more deceitful and wicked they are by nature. The more that they are this type of person, the deeper their love and pursuit of status and power becomes" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It

Means to Pursue the Truth (6)). I saw how those that are “strict with themselves and tolerant of others” have a deep obsession with status. They always seek to have a place in people’s hearts. Such people have a deceitful and wicked nature and are hypocritical. This characterization really cut to the quick. I thought of how I had taken on much of our team’s work in my tenure as team leader. I was always considering other people’s schedules, their workloads and what difficulties they faced. I was particularly caring and considerate of others, making sure they never felt unhappy. On the surface, I may have seemed quite understanding, but in reality, I just acted that way to bolster my reputation and status. I was always worried that I might say or do something that would upset others and give them a bad impression of me. I carried more of a burden than anyone else, was able to suffer and pay a price, showed tolerance, understanding and an ability to compromise, but the subtext of this was my thinking that I was better than others, that I had greater stature than others, and was understanding and tolerant of them. This led them to look up to me and rely upon me. They waited for me to resolve their issues and were unable to rely upon God and seek the truth to achieve resolution. I realized I had been corrupted by Satan and was full of satanic dispositions. I was by no means unselfish and magnanimous! When the sister passed work off to me, I happily took it on, but inside I was unhappy, and while I worked, I resented her for not bearing a burden. I had a lot of work and was under enormous pressure, and while I didn’t say anything and acted as if I were unselfish, inwardly I felt it was all quite unfair and didn’t want to suffer or put thought into anything else. While assigning work, when a sister pandered to her flesh and didn’t want to work too hard, I didn’t fellowship the truth to resolve her issue and instead took on her work. In actuality, I had my opinions about her, I resented how her laziness had made more work for me. Thinking back on all that, I realized

that my tolerance of others was all fake, it was all a pretense, and I wasn't really happy to help them. I was clearly just selfish, but I acted like I was purely altruistic—I was deceiving everyone. I had only one motive in my actions—I just wanted to win the praise, respect and commendation of others. How hypocritical and fake I was! People only saw my deceptive actions, but couldn't see my actual thoughts. They all believed I had good humanity and was very tolerant. Was I not deceiving and hoodwinking them? The more I thought about it, the more disgusted I was with myself. I went through life wearing a mask, and not only did I suffer greatly myself, I also delayed the church's work. I was harming both myself and others. I began to hate myself and wanted to repent and transform as soon as possible.

Later on, I came across another two passages of God's words that gave me some new perspective on my state. Almighty God says: **“When a church leader sees brothers or sisters doing their duties perfunctorily, they may not rebuke them, though they should. When they clearly see that the interests of God's house are suffering, they do not concern themselves with this or make any inquiries, and they do not cause the least offense to others. In fact, they are not really showing consideration for people's weaknesses; instead, their intention and goal is to win over people's hearts. They are fully aware that: ‘As long as I do this and don't cause offense to anyone, they'll think I'm a good leader. They'll have a good, high opinion of me. They'll approve of me and like me.’ They don't care how much damage is done to the interests of God's house, or how great losses are caused to the life entry of God's chosen people, or how greatly their church life is disturbed, they just persist in their satanic philosophy and cause no offense to anyone. There is never any self-reproach in their hearts. When they see**

someone causing disruptions and disturbances, at the very most they might have a few words with them about it, downplaying the issue, and then be done with it. They will not fellowship on the truth, or point out the essence of the problem to that person, less still will they dissect their state, and they will never fellowship what God's intentions are. A false leader never exposes or dissects the errors people frequently make, or the corrupt dispositions people often reveal. They don't solve any real problems, but instead always indulge people's erroneous practices and revelations of corruption, and no matter how negative or weak people are, they do not take this seriously. They merely preach some words and doctrines and speak a few words of exhortation to deal with the situation in a perfunctory manner, trying to maintain harmony. As a result, God's chosen people do not know how to reflect on and know themselves, there is no resolution for whatever corrupt dispositions they reveal, and they live amid words and doctrines, notions and imaginings, without any life entry. They even believe in their hearts, 'Our leader has even more understanding for our weaknesses than God does. Our stature is too small to live up to God's requirements. We just need to fulfill the requirements of our leader; by submitting to our leader, we are submitting to God. If a day comes when the Above dismisses our leader, we will make ourselves heard; to keep our leader and stop them from being dismissed, we will negotiate with the Above and force them into agreeing to our demands. This is how we will do right by our leader.' When people have such thoughts in their hearts, when they have established such a relationship with their leader, and this kind of dependence, envy, and worship has arisen in their hearts toward their leader, they come to have ever greater faith in this leader, and always want to listen to the leader's words, rather than seeking the

truth in God's words. Such a leader has almost taken the place of God in people's hearts. If a leader is willing to maintain such a relationship with God's chosen people, if they derive a feeling of enjoyment from this in their heart, and believe that God's chosen people ought to treat them like this, then there is no difference between this leader and Paul, they have already set foot on the path of an antichrist, and God's chosen people have already been misled by this antichrist, and are **completely lacking in discernment**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). **"You can compare this to some of the antichrists and evil people in the church. In order to solidify their status and power within the church, and to gain a better reputation among other members, they are able to undergo suffering and pay a price while performing their duties, and they may even renounce their work and families and sell off everything they have to expend themselves for God. In some cases, the prices that they pay and the suffering they undergo in expending themselves for God exceed what an average person can withstand; they are able to embody a spirit of extreme self-denial in order to maintain their status. Yet, no matter how much they suffer or what prices they pay, none of them safeguard God's testimony or the interests of God's house, nor do they practice according to God's words. The goal that they pursue is just to attain status, power, and God's rewards. Nothing that they do has the slightest relation to the truth. Regardless of how strict they are with themselves and how tolerant they are of others, what will their ultimate outcome be? What will God think of them? Will He determine their outcome based on the external good behaviors that they live out? He certainly will not. People view and judge others based on these behaviors and manifestations, and because they cannot see through to the essence of**

other people, they end up being deceived by them. God, however, is never deceived by man. He absolutely will not commend and remember people's moral conduct because they were able to be strict with themselves and tolerant of others. Instead, He will condemn them for their ambitions and for the paths they have taken in pursuit of status"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (6)).

Pondering over God's words, I became more clear about the nature and consequences of my actions. In order to protect my reputation and status, I always considered others' difficulties and did everything myself. As a result, the brothers and sisters couldn't fulfill their duties normally. Some pandered to their flesh and didn't bear a burden, others were stuck admiring and relying upon me, would seek me out whenever they had problems, and were unable to rely upon God and seek the truth to resolve issues. God had no place in their hearts. I had done evil! When the sister wasn't willing to bear a burden in her duty and pushed her duty onto me, if I had just fellowshiped with her a bit and allowed her to see the nature and consequences of her current state, perhaps she could have rebelled against her flesh and relied upon God to resolve her issue. This would lead to progress in her life and her professional skills would improve. But I only considered my own reputation and status, and didn't fellowship or give advice to my brothers and sisters mired in corrupt dispositions. Outwardly, this way of acting agreed with people's fleshly concerns, but they made no life progress and became increasingly decadent. By continually indulging people, I was harming them! Everyone failed to discern my behavior and was misled by me into thinking I was a good and caring person. How fake I was, I was misleading all of them! Outwardly, it seemed like I bore a great burden in my duty and could suffer and pay a price. People saw me as a good person, but I had actually been condemned by God, because my every

action was not done to satisfy God, but rather to protect my status in people's hearts. I hadn't done any obvious evil, but I hadn't brought people into the reality of God's words, instead bringing them before me. I was trying to win people over and was revealing an antichrist disposition. Realizing this, I saw that I was in quite a precarious state. I was doing my duty based on traditional cultural values and was walking the God-opposing path of an antichrist.

Later on, I came across another passage of God's words that gave me more clarity regarding my issues. Almighty God says: **"No matter to which group such statements about moral conduct are put forth, all require people to exercise self-restraint—restraint over their own desires and immoral conduct—and to hold favorable ideological and moral viewpoints. No matter how much these statements influence humankind, and no matter whether that influence is positive or negative, the aim of these so-called moralists was, put succinctly, to restrict and regulate people's moral conduct by putting forward such statements, so that people would have a basic code for how they should comport themselves and act, how they should view people and things, and how they should perceive their society and country. To look at the positive, the invention of these statements on moral conduct has, to a certain extent, played a role in restricting and regulating the moral conduct of humanity. But to look at the objective facts, it has led people into embracing some false and pretentious thoughts and viewpoints, making people who are influenced and inculcated by traditional culture more insidious, more treacherous, better at pretending, and more confined in their thinking. Because of the influence and inculcation of traditional culture, people have gradually adopted those mistaken views and statements of traditional culture as positive things, and**

worship as saints these luminaries and great figures who mislead people. When people have been misled, their minds become muddled, numb, and dulled. They don't know what normal humanity is, or what people with normal humanity should pursue and adhere to. They don't know how people should live in this world or what kind of mode or rules of existence they should adopt, much less what the proper aim of human existence is. Due to the influence, inculcation, and even confinement of traditional culture, the positive things, requirements and rules from God, have been suppressed. In this sense, the various statements on moral conduct in traditional culture have, to a large extent, deeply misled and influenced people's thinking, confining their thoughts and leading them astray, away from the correct path in life, and further and further away from God's requirements. This means that the deeper you are influenced by the various ideas and viewpoints on moral conduct in traditional culture, and the longer you are inculcated by them, the further you stray from the thoughts, aspirations, goal to be pursued, and rules of existence that people with normal humanity should have, and the further you stray from the standard that God requires of people. ... God's chosen people must see through one fact: God's word is God's word, the truth is the truth, and human words are human words. Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness are human words, and traditional culture is human words. Human words are never the truth, nor will they ever become the truth. This is a fact" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). Through God's words I realized that the views and ideas that traditional culture instills in us are ridiculous and absurd and they are at odds with the conscience and reason of normal people and the normal humanity that God demands man to live out. Misled and influenced

by this traditional idea of “being strict with myself and tolerant of others,” I became muddle-headed, mistaken and undiscerning. I thought that only by being tolerant of people, considerate of them in every way, and troubling myself instead of others, would I be displaying good character, broad-mindedness and magnanimity. I shouldn’t ask too much of anyone or be too strict and should refrain from being petty. These ideas were deeply rooted in my mind, controlled my every word and action and influenced how I interacted with others. Thinking it over, I saw that my tolerance of others was not the leniency of normal humanity, but rather an indulgence that lacked principles or standards. As team leader, I should have reasonably assigned work based upon our overall work schedule and the skills of each member, so that everyone could play a part, have a chance to practice in their duty, and put their skills into play. Only as such would our team’s work progress normally and improve. For those that were less skilled, had average caliber and were slow to update knowledge, work assignments should be based on their actual stature and difficulties. They should be assigned easier work to make sure they’d be up to the task and should not be forced into doing something they were incapable of. As for those with good caliber, an ability to learn new things, and a grasp of the principles and skills, they could be given a reasonably larger amount of work, be asked to put more thought into their work and bear more of a burden—this would allow them to progress faster. If they encountered difficulties and felt a bit stressed, this was normal and would impel them to rely upon God more, improve their skills and make faster progress. What’s more, if anyone was upset after I assigned them work, I could communicate with them to see if they had real difficulties or were just indulging in comfort and not willing to suffer and pay a price. I could then handle things based on the actual situation—this would be acting based on truth principles. In fact,

most of the time I did assign work reasonably based on team members' actual situations. I didn't ask too much, wasn't that strict and my team members could handle their assignments. When they were occasionally lazy, not willing to pay a price and strive to succeed, or feared taking responsibility and passed the work off to others, I should have fellowshiped and advised them to make them aware of their corrupt disposition. In more serious cases I should have pruned them and could not continually indulge them and just tolerate their behavior with no baseline standard. Only in so doing could I maintain the normal work progress of our team.

Later on, I came across another two passages of God's words that gave me more clarity on my path of practice. Almighty God says: **"In everything you do, you must examine whether your intentions are correct. If you are able to act according to the requirements of God, then your relationship with God is normal. This is the minimum standard. Look into your intentions, and if you find that incorrect intentions have arisen, be able to rebel against them and act according to the words of God; thus will you become someone who is right before God, which in turn demonstrates that your relationship with God is normal, and that all that you do is for God's sake, not your own. In all you do and all you say, be able to set your heart right and be righteous in your actions, and do not be led by your feelings, nor act according to your own will. These are principles by which believers in God must conduct themselves"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Is Your Relationship With God?). **"So, what are the truth principles required by God? That people be understanding of others when they are weak and negative, being considerate of their pain and difficulties, and then inquire about these things, offer help and support, and read them**

God's words to help them solve their problems, enabling them to understand God's intentions and stop being weak, and bringing them before God. Isn't this way of practicing in line with the principles? Practicing in this way is in line with the truth principles. Naturally, relationships of this kind are even more so in line with the truth principles. When people are deliberately causing disturbances and disruptions, or deliberately doing their duty in a perfunctory way, if you see this and are able to point these things out to them, reprimand them, and help them according to the principles, then this is in line with the truth principles. If you turn a blind eye, or condone their behavior and cover for them, and even go so far as to say nice things to praise and applaud them, these ways of interacting with people, dealing with issues, and handling problems, are clearly at odds with the truth principles, and have no basis in the words of God. So, these ways of interacting with people and dealing with issues are clearly improper, and this really is not easy to discover if they are not dissected and discerned according to God's words" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). After pondering over God's words, I felt much clearer. As a believer, I had to have God in my heart when I spoke and acted, and I should place my heart before God to be scrutinized. This is the very least I should do. What's more, while interacting with others and partnering in my duty, I should set good intentions, act according to truth principles, refrain from doing anything that would damage the interests of God's house and always consider the church's work. I should help and support those who were negative, weak and facing hardship, and should fellowship with, help, advise or expose anyone that revealed their corrupt disposition or intentionally disrupted and disturbed church work instead of tolerating them or foolishly extending

goodwill. When assigning work, I shouldn't protect my own reputation and only consider people's flesh and feelings. I had to assign work reasonably based on principles and the actual state of the team to make sure the work was not delayed. This way of practicing would be beneficial to the church's work and all members. After that, when interacting with brothers and sisters, I practiced being honest, saying what I truly felt and communicating with people when I had issues. When assigning work, I would assign based on people's actual situations so that everyone was able to play their part. I would assign members to handle relatively easy problems and would only get involved if they couldn't resolve them. When people were unhappy with their assignment and didn't want to pay more of a price, I would fellowship God's intention with them, let them reflect on and know their corrupt disposition and rectify their improper attitudes. When I had more work than I could handle or encountered issues, I would discuss with others about how to assign work reasonably to prevent delays and would stop taking it all on myself. Everyone was able to proactively take part in work and was much more enthusiastic in their duties, and our work progress improved. I felt much more at ease. At times I still display corruption, but I'm able to consciously practice according to God's words. It was only with the guidance of God's words that I was able to turn things around. Thank God!

6. Tested by a Double Predicament

By Zhong Zhen, China

Saturday, October 15, 2022, Sunny, Turning cloudy

Not long ago, Huaxi Church faced a large crackdown, and the leaders arranged for me to come and assist with the aftermath. Today after I arrived at Huaxi Church, Wang Ying took me to a host house and told me, “Many of our brothers, sisters, leaders and workers were arrested on September 26. Most of our homes are no longer safe; the police have the names and photographs of those of us who were not arrested, so it’s hard for us to show up for work.” My heart sank after hearing these words. I thought to myself, “I planned on going back as soon as my work here is done. But now I see that things here are much worse than I imagined. So many of our brothers, sisters, leaders and workers have been arrested; so many books of God’s words need to be moved. Finding a safe place won’t be easy right now, and on top of that, I have to discuss work arrangements with those whose safety is at risk. I never know when I’ll be watched and then arrested. The police are now nabbing believers like crazy. The way things are going, I’d be persecuted to death if I were arrested. If I were tortured to death by the police, wouldn’t I lose the opportunity to do my duty? How could I be saved then?” But then I thought that this environment had arisen under the sovereignty and arrangement of God. Guided by reason, I submitted to the circumstances and immediately began looking into the situation with the books of God’s words.

After Wang Ying left, the sister who hosted me told me that neither the books in her house nor those in a brother’s house had been moved, and that the brother had been arrested. As soon as I heard this, my heart tightened:

Our brothers and sisters were arrested over 20 days ago, and these books of God's words were still in unsafe places. If they were to fall into the hands of the police, the loss would be enormous. The books must be protected at all costs. But as soon as I thought about moving them myself, I became anxious. I remembered a sister who had been caught while transporting books and beaten to death by the police. What if I got caught while moving the books? The police would never let me go, and I would most likely get a heavy sentence. I might even be beaten to death. Wouldn't that spell the end of my life as a believer in God? I was torn between my own future and the interests of God's house. Pain and conflict surged through my heart. As a believer in God, I would be filled with self-reproach if I were to just stand by and do nothing while the books of God's words remained in danger. So I quickly started discussing with the sister a place to store the books. But the environment here was hostile and we couldn't think of a place that would be suitable. Seeing that the work was not progressing, it was as if a thousand-pound burden was weighing on my heart.

Monday, October 17, 2022, Cloudy

We discussed the work late into the night yesterday, so I ended up staying the night at Sister Song Yi's home. This afternoon, Wang Ying came over, anxiously telling me, "There's been an outbreak and the city was locked down last night. You can't go back." Hearing this, I became anxious. Dealing with the aftermath of the crackdown is already hard enough; now the plague has come and the city's on lockdown. How will this work get done now that we're facing such a double predicament? The plague is raging now; outside, patrols are going on everywhere. All checkpoints are strictly controlled. Even if I did find a safe place for the books, I wouldn't be able to keep them safe if I were caught by the patrolling police while

moving them. That would be an even greater loss. But I can't just leave the books in unsafe places either. What should I do? My only hope is that the lockdown will be lifted soon and I can move the books as soon as possible.

Thursday, November 10, 2022, Overcast with rain

This morning, I anxiously looked out the window. On the street below, there was a long line of people getting PCR tests. I saw absolutely no sign that the lockdown was going to be lifted. Anxiously, I urged the sister hosting me to see if there was any other way out. Resignedly, she told me, "The plague is getting worse. No one is allowed to leave the neighborhood; everything is sealed off." I became even more anxious upon hearing this, thinking, "How am I supposed to get this work done with the city completely locked down? If the lockdown persists, how am I going to move the books of God's words? When will the lockdown actually end? I've been here for more than 20 days, and the sister who's hosting me is also being pursued by the police. I'm at risk of being arrested at any time. The city is also a high-risk area for the plague, so even if the lockdown is lifted, I could very well get infected and then be quarantined once I go out. And what if I get infected and die here?" Thinking about this made my heart feel weak. I thought, "I don't even have a safe place to stay now. It's too dangerous! I have to finish my work here and go back as soon as possible so that I won't have to hide from place to place and live in such a repressive state. But now the plague is raging; buses and trains are no longer running, so how am I supposed to go back?" I kept thinking about ways to return safely. The more I thought, the more distant I became from God. I became upset and perturbed. I was in torment.

This evening, I fell ill. My head was pounding and my entire body ached with weakness. I could not walk steadily and my body was limp. I

rested my head on the table, unable to lift it. I felt like I was experiencing the symptoms of the plague. I felt so confused about all this. How can I have suddenly fallen sick when I was perfectly fine before? What lesson am I supposed to learn? What is God's intention in this situation?

Friday, November 11, 2022, Sunny

While doing my devotional this morning, I read these words of God which say: **“In mainland China, God’s chosen people have all experienced the suppression and arrests of the great red dragon, and also experienced some temptations. No matter how many times they have been weak and failed, all those who are able to pursue the truth have gradually grown in stature and have had life entry. If they again encounter the environments and temptations they experienced in the past, they will have some faith. If their experience brings them to the point where one day they are unafraid of death, and can see clearly that the life and death of people are indeed in God’s hands and are orchestrated and arranged by God, doesn’t that mean their faith has become greater? Just like in the age of the Old Testament—why did the lions not bite Daniel when he was thrown into the lions’ den? It was because he had faith that God did not permit the lions to bite him. Then what was Daniel thinking in his heart? He did not complain about God. In his heart, he said: ‘God has thrown me into the lions’ den. I and the lions are both creations. If God permits them to eat me, then I should die. If God does not permit it, the lions will not eat me. That proves I should still live in God’s hands, and my lifespan is not yet over—I should not die. This is determined by the Creator.’ When Daniel encountered this matter, first, he did not deny God’s name; second, he had no suspicion toward what God did, did not make**

judgments, condemn, or rebel against God, and was able to submit to God's arrangements. Satan was thus defeated and humiliated. So, what were Daniel's actions and manifestations? They were testimony. Only when you have such stature will you encounter such trials. Even if God places you in the lions' den, you will not be afraid, and the lions will not dare to eat you. This proves that you have true faith and that you have embarked upon the path of being made perfect. Life growth is exactly like this. Being thrown into the lions' den is also a trial, just like Job's immense wealth being taken away. What was Job's manifestation? (Submission.) Why was he able to submit? It was because Job had no doubts about what God did. Whether God bestowed rewards or took away, it was fine for Job. Even if God gave one day and took away the next, Job still submitted. However God acted, it was fine for Job; he could let God orchestrate as He willed and submit to God. He was compatible with God. No matter how God acted, even if God toyed with him, he could still submit. ... True belief contains true submission, and true submission gives rise to true belief. If you have true belief and can achieve true submission, what trial can defeat you? What environment can defeat you? None can defeat you. Even if you are thrown into the lions' den, the lions will not dare to eat you. Isn't this a good thing? (Yes.)" (God's Fellowship). God's words lit up my heart like a beacon. When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den under the king's oppression, he did not blame God even though he was facing death. Instead, he held firm to his faith in God's sovereignty over everything and gave himself completely to God. He had genuine faith in God. Daniel's experience inspired me. It showed me that I, like Daniel, need to have the same faith in God and submit to His sovereignty in an environment of persecution and oppression. But when faced with these real-life situations, I

lacked the faith that Daniel possessed. When the church faced a large crackdown and the books of God's words needed to be moved quickly, my first thoughts were about the significant risks involved in this duty. I feared I would be caught by the police along the way and beaten to death. When the pandemic broke out, I was afraid of getting infected and dying, and I lived in a state of fear and cowardice. I even wanted to abandon my duty to protect myself and to run away as fast as I could. This hostile environment revealed my lack of genuine faith in and submission to God. When nonbelievers see an entire city swallowed up by the pandemic, they wallow in terror and dread. This is because they don't believe in God and have no one to rely on. Yet I, a believer in God, was still so fearful and I didn't have faith in God's almightiness and sovereignty, so how could I call myself a believer? I thought of Daniel, who found himself in a foreign land, and persecuted by a king who kept him from praying to God. Daniel refused to compromise with the forces of darkness, choosing death over succumbing, and he continued to pray to God. Ultimately, he was thrown into the lions' den, but with God by his side, the lions dared not harm him. Similarly, whether we are confronted with the pandemic or arrests, it's all in God's hands. It's entirely up to God whether or not I'm arrested. Even if I'm arrested and imprisoned, I should give myself to God and stand firm in my testimony to Him. If I catch the virus, I will submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. Even if I die, I will not complain. The most urgent matter now is protecting the books of God's words. No matter the risk, I must rely on God to move them as quickly as possible. I must let go of my worries and work as one with my brothers and sisters to handle this aftermath work properly. Once I started thinking this way, I felt a great sense of relief. This afternoon, before I knew it, I was feeling better.

Thursday, December 15, 2022, Rainy

How quickly time goes by. It's been two months since I arrived here. I've been handling the aftermath of the crackdown ever since I got here, but due to the hostile environment, progress has been slow. Yesterday evening, I learned that somebody had acted as a Judas and sold out many leaders, workers, brothers, and sisters. I thought to myself, "The homes here that could have hosted people are no longer safe. All of our work has been greatly hindered, and now the situation has gotten even worse. Just how long will it take to complete this work?" The thought made me feel suffocated. Tonight, Wang Ying came by, saying she had very likely been followed the previous night and that it was no longer safe here. She suggested that I go back. I found her suggestion most agreeable, and I thought, "With things this bad, it would be best to go back. In any case, it wasn't as if I didn't want to stay here, but it's just there's no safe place to stay. Now I would be perfectly justified in leaving." But as soon as I thought of leaving, I started feeling guilty again. There is still so much work to be done here. Would it be right to abandon my duties and leave? Despite the hostility of the current situation, our brothers and sisters still find a way to come here and discuss work. If I were to go back, I wouldn't be able to follow up on work. But there is nowhere safe to stay here. I find myself living in constant fear and anxiety, like a frightened bird. I feel so conflicted. Should I go, or should I stay? I don't know what to do.

Sunday, December 18, 2022, Sunny

Today, I continued to ponder, "Why do I always want to flee when I am confronted with a hostile environment?" I happened to receive a letter from a sister, and I was deeply moved after reading it. She spoke of how, after being released from detention, she had wished to stay in the church to

deal with the aftermath of the crackdown. But because she was worried she could be arrested by the police at any time, she left. As a result, she was not able to do her duty for a while, which left her with regrets. In particular, she quoted a passage from God's words that was quite relevant to my own state. Almighty God says: **"In the process of performing your duties, on the positive side, if you can treat your duties in the correct manner, never abandon them regardless of the circumstances you face, and even when others lose faith and stop performing their duties, you still hold fast to yours and never abandon them from start to finish, remaining steadfast and loyal to your duties until the end, then you are genuinely treating your duties as duties and demonstrating complete loyalty. If you can meet this standard, you've essentially met the mark for performing your duties adequately; this is on the positive side. However, before reaching this standard, on the negative side, one must be able to withstand various temptations. What kind of problem is it when someone can't withstand temptations in the process of performing their duty, so they abandon their duty and flee, betraying their duty? That amounts to betraying God. Betraying God's commission is to betray God. Can one who betrays God still be saved? This person is done for; all hope is lost, and the duties they previously performed were merely laboring, which vanished into nothingness with their betrayal. So, it's essential to hold fast to one's duty; by doing so, there is hope. By loyally fulfilling one's duty, one can be saved and earn God's approval. What does everyone find to be the most difficult part of holding fast to one's duty? It is whether they can stand firm when faced with temptation. What do these temptations include? Money, status, intimate relationships, feelings. What else? If some duties carry risks, even risks to one's life, and performing such duties might result in arrest and**

imprisonment or even being persecuted to death, can you still perform your duty? Can you persevere? The ease with which these temptations can be overcome depends on whether one pursues the truth. It depends on one's ability to gradually discern and recognize these temptations while pursuing the truth, to recognize their essence and the satanic tricks behind them. It also requires recognizing one's own corrupt dispositions, one's nature essence, and one's weaknesses. One must also continually ask God to protect them so they can withstand these temptations. If one can withstand them, and hold fast to their duty without betrayal or escape under any circumstance, then the likelihood of being saved reaches 50 percent. Is this 50 percent easily achievable? Each step is a challenge, fraught with peril; it's not easy to attain!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). God's words moved my heart deeply. God's intention is the hope that I always hold fast to my duties no matter the circumstances that befall me without betraying or running away. Only then will I have true testimony. If I retreat in cowardice and fear in the face of a hostile environment, abandoning my duties in the name of self-preservation, I will be betraying God and lose my testimony. With so many brothers and sisters being arrested, there is an urgent need to attend to the aftermath of the crackdown. I have read so many of God's words and enjoyed everything that God has provided, but in the moment of truth, I am unable to remain loyal to God or play my role as a created being. I even want to use the hostile environment here as a justification to leave. How selfish and cunning I am! If I leave, I would not be able to discuss the work with my brothers and sisters face to face. This would impact work. Moreover, brothers and sisters are becoming a bit timid and fearful because of the mass arrests, so we have to support and encourage one another at this time. I will need to fellowship with them

more often about God's intention and how to do our duties well in the face of persecution and hardships. So, it is beneficial to the work that I stay here. If I were just concerned about my own interests and abandoned my duty because I feared death, then I would be a downright deserter and traitor to God. How selfish, despicable, and lacking in humanity that would be! With these things in mind, I know what I need to do. I cannot allow the present circumstances to frighten me, nor can I abandon my duty and leave just because Wang Ying is being followed and I am afraid of being implicated. I must rely on God and do all I can in seeing to the aftermath work I was sent here to handle. No matter the perils that may befall me or how difficult the work may be, I am willing to offer my loyalty. Whether I live or die, I will entrust myself to God, allow Him to orchestrate everything, and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. Even if it costs me my life, I will get this work done well.

Tuesday, December 20, 2022, Sunny

Reflecting on what has been happening to me, scene by scene, I pondered: "Why is it that I wish to flee and abandon my duty the moment I encounter a perilous environment? What nature is controlling me?" In my seeking, I saw two passages of God's words: **"Antichrists are extremely selfish and despicable. They do not have true faith in God, much less loyalty to God; when they encounter an issue, they only protect and safeguard themselves. For them, nothing is more important than their own safety. As long as they can live and won't get arrested, they don't care how much harm is done to the work of the church. These people are extremely selfish, they don't think of the brothers and sisters at all, or of the work of the church, they only think of their own safety. They are antichrists. ... Antichrists abandon the work of the church and**

God's offerings, and they do not arrange for people to handle the aftermath. This is the same as permitting the great red dragon to seize God's offerings and His chosen people. Is this not a covert betrayal of God's offerings and His chosen people? When those who are loyal to God know clearly that an environment is dangerous, they still brave the risk of doing the work of handling the aftermath, and they keep the losses to God's house to a minimum before they themselves withdraw. They do not give priority to their own safety. Tell Me, in this wicked country of the great red dragon, who could ensure that there is no danger at all in believing in God and doing a duty? Whatever duty one takes on, it entails some risk—yet the performance of duty is commissioned by God, and while following God, one must take on the risk of doing their duty. One should exercise wisdom, and one has need of taking measures to ensure their safety, but one should not put their personal safety first. They should consider God's intentions, putting the work of His house first and putting the spread of the gospel first. Completing God's commission of them is what matters most, and it comes first. Antichrists give top priority to their personal safety; they believe that nothing else has anything to do with them. They do not care when something happens to someone else, regardless of who it might be. As long as nothing bad happens to the antichrists themselves, they feel at ease. They are devoid of any loyalty, which is determined by the antichrists' nature essence" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). "Antichrists show no loyalty to God. When they are assigned work, they accept it quite happily, and make some nice declarations, but when danger comes, they run away the fastest; they are the first to run, the first to escape. This shows that their selfishness and despicableness are particularly severe. They have no sense of

responsibility or loyalty at all. When faced with a problem, they only know how to flee and how to hide, and think only of protecting themselves, never considering their responsibilities or duties. For the sake of their own personal safety, antichrists consistently display their selfish and despicable nature. They do not prioritize the work of God's house or their own duties. Even less do they prioritize the interests of God's house. Instead, they prioritize their own safety" (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God exposes the selfishness and despicableness of antichrists. When encountering a hostile environment while doing their duty, they think only of themselves wherever they go. They place particular value on their own safety and lives. Once their own interests are affected, they abandon the work of God's house and show no loyalty to God. Reading God's words exposing the antichrists, I was pricked in the heart. Didn't I act in this way? Seeing the bad environment here in the church and the outbreak of the plague, I feared that I would be arrested and tortured to death by the police; I also feared I would contract the virus and die. I was particularly afraid of death and wished to flee as quickly as I could. Having been living by satanic poisons like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "A person's destiny is in their own hands," and "A bad life is better than a good death," I believed that we should think of ourselves in life; I would rather drag out an ignoble existence than pay a price for doing my duty. I am too selfish and despicable! Those brothers and sisters who loyally do their duties, despite knowing the risks of doing so in hostile environments, hold fast to their duties by relying on God, risking their lives and ultimately protecting the books of God's words and the safety of other brothers and sisters. By contrast, I feel so ashamed. Here, the environment is hostile, the plague is a bit worse, but there are still brothers and sisters putting themselves at risk

by hosting me, yet I keep worrying about myself, unable to wholeheartedly devote myself to my duty. I'm truly lacking in humanity! If I had any conscience or reason at all and knew that the books of God's words were at risk, I would do my utmost to ensure the aftermath work was done properly and minimize the losses. If I really did flee and the books of God's words were not moved in time, they would very likely fall into the hands of the great red dragon. Even more brothers and sisters would be in danger of being arrested, and the life entry of brothers and sisters would suffer even greater losses as a result. This way, even if I did evade capture and save my own life, I would leave behind a serious transgression. I would be filled with overwhelming regret, yet it would be too late to do anything about it! I recalled what the Lord Jesus said: **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). **"He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it"** (Matthew 10:39). I also recalled a passage of Almighty God's words which says: **"Family, wealth, and the material things of this life are all external things; the only thing that is related to the self is life. To every living person, life is the thing most worthy of being treasured, the most precious thing and, as it happens, these people were able to offer their most precious possession—life—as confirmation of and testimony to God's love for mankind. Until the day they died, they did not deny God's name, nor did they deny God's work, and they used their last moments of life to testify to the existence of this fact—is this not the highest form of testimony? This is the best way of doing one's duty; this is what it is to fulfill one's responsibility. When Satan threatened and terrorized them, and, in the end, even when it made them pay the price of their lives, they did not abandon their responsibility. This is what it**

is to fulfill one's duty to the utmost extent. What do I mean by this? Do I mean to have you use the same method to testify of God and to spread His gospel? You do not necessarily need to do so, but you must understand that this is your responsibility, that if God needs you to, you should accept it as something you are honor-bound to do. People today have fear and worry inside them, but what purpose do those feelings serve? If God does not need you to do this, what is the use in worrying about it? If God needs you to do this, you should not shirk this responsibility nor reject it. You should cooperate proactively and accept it without worry. No matter how one dies, they should not die before Satan, and not die in Satan's hands. If one is going to die, they should die in God's hands. People came from God, and to God they return—such is the reason and attitude that a created being should possess” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). God's words made me understand that when danger and the threat of death befall me while I am doing my duty, I should remain loyal to God. Even if it means sacrificing my life, I shall hold fast to my duty and never yield to Satan. This is the most powerful testimony of defeating Satan, which is approved by God. When facing threats to my life, if I refuse God's commission out of my fear of death, it will become a mark of shame and be detested by God. Those prophets and apostles throughout the ages faced gruesome deaths for the sake of preaching the gospel and testifying to God: Some were quartered by horses, others were hacked to death, while some others were burned to death. Peter was even crucified upside down for God. In the last days, many brothers and sisters have been arrested and brutally tortured by the Communist Party for propagating the gospel of the kingdom. Even on the brink of death, they still refuse to deny God's name; while some, even when

being tortured to death, refuse to become Judas or betray God. They have borne beautiful and resounding testimonies for God. They have used their own lives to defend the true way and proclaimed and borne testimony to this evil world with their death that God is the one true God, the Creator. Even if it means sacrificing their lives, they still will not hesitate. Giving one's life to testify for God is a valuable and meaningful act. It is the highest form of testimony. Realizing this, I was less afraid. I was willing to face this environment by relying on God.

At this moment, these words of God came into my mind. Almighty God says: **“Regardless of how ‘powerful’ Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but, moreover, must submit to all of God’s orders and commands. Without God’s permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God’s permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God. In the eyes of God, Satan is inferior to the lilies on the mountain, to the birds flying in the air, to the fish in the sea, and to the maggots on the earth. Its role**

among all things is to serve all things, to serve mankind, and to serve God's work and His plan of management. Regardless of how malicious its nature, and how evil its essence, the only thing it can do is to dutifully abide by its function: being of service to God, and providing a counterpoint to God. Such is the substance and position of Satan. Its essence is unconnected to life, unconnected to power, unconnected to authority; it is merely a plaything in God's hands, just a machine in service to God!" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). **"When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 36). God's words carry authority and power. Everything is under God's sovereignty and arrangement. As savage and vicious as Satan may be, even it cannot escape the boundaries set by God. Without God's permission, it dares not cross the line, let alone harm us. Just as Satan wished to devastate Job, God did not allow Satan to take Job's life. And though Satan employed every trick and scheme at its disposal, it dared not go after Job's life. This made me realize that God's authority is beyond the reach of any hostile forces. As bad as things are here, I haven't been arrested. This is all because of God's protection. One time, I went to a host house, but the sister never came to pick me up. Later on, I found out that the home had been sold out by a Judas and was under heavy police surveillance. That I did not make it there was all God's protection. Moreover, this plague has tied the hands of the police, hindering their efforts to arrest brothers and sisters. Otherwise, who knows how many more brothers and sisters would face arrests. This is all God's miraculous deed, wisdom and almightiness. Even in the midst of this

hostile environment, the CCP does not dare touch me without God's permission. It's all up to God whether I will be arrested and given a heavy sentence. I can no longer live for myself; I am ready to give myself to God and let Him lead me through each and every day. No matter how hostile the environment is here or how hard the plague rages, I will hold fast to my duty until the very end. Realizing this, I found peace of mind and threw myself into my duty.

Saturday, December 31, 2022, Sunny

Yesterday, Su Xiao and I arrived at a church. To our surprise, the brother who hosted us offered us a place to store the books. We were both thrilled and then decided to split up the work. Su Xiao went to understand the situation with the house while I returned to discuss with the brothers and sisters the matter of moving the books of God's words. By this afternoon, we successfully moved the first batch of books.

Tuesday, February 14, 2023, Sunny

We've been moving books of God's words continuously these past few days, finally moving the last batch of books today. At around 3:00 this morning, I saw the brothers who had been moving the books return safely, and I was overcome with emotion that words could not express. During this period, we managed to safely move all of the books despite such a hostile environment. This is all the result of God's guidance and the unified cooperation of the brothers and sisters. As I sat on the bus on my way home, I was filled with a sense of peace and security. Throughout the journey, I kept pondering: Despite coming here to work in a perilous environment, I've come to deeply realize that it's precisely in perilous environments such as this that we're able to see God's miraculous acts, and

recognize that God's authority and power are beyond the reach of any hostile forces. I also now understand that experiencing such hostile environments can perfect my faith, help me understand God's almightiness and sovereignty, and reveal my selfishness and despicableness. When in a perilous environment, I tended to protect my own interests and think only of my own future and fate. God's words led me to break through Satan's dark influence, persevere to the end and complete the work I was sent to do. I've gained so much throughout this journey. This is an unforgettable experience and a precious treasure in my life! Thank God!

7. “Preparing” for a Gathering

By Xiao Li, China

In February 2023, I was chosen as a church leader, primarily responsible for watering work. At first, I could also take care of some work that the sister I worked with was responsible for. Later, the results of the watering work seriously declined, and I became a bit anxious. I thought, “I am responsible for the watering work. The poor results are directly related to me. Will the upper leaders think that I lack the work capability, can’t do anything well, and am unable to undertake the work?” To prevent the leaders from looking down on me, I devoted all my thoughts and energy to the watering work, and didn’t involve myself much in the work the sister was responsible for. I also realized that by acting this way, I was working independently, without harmonious cooperation. But when I thought that I was mainly responsible for the watering work, and how poor results would affect my reputation and status, I stopped caring about anything else.

One day, I suddenly received a letter from the upper leaders, asking me to come to a gathering the next day. I felt anxious, thinking, “This is bad. The leaders will surely ask me about various church works. This month, aside from following up on the watering work, I haven’t looked into any other work at all. I have no clue about what issues there are in the various tasks or how they are progressing. If the leaders ask questions and I can’t give any answer, what will they think of me? Will they think that I lack a sense of burden in my duties and form a bad impression of me? If they find out that I only followed up on my own watering work and ignored other tasks, they will surely say I am extremely selfish and despicable, and that I only care about my personal interests and not the overall work of the church, and that I only pursue reputation and status. If they end up pruning

me or dismissing me, how embarrassing would that be?” I thought that at the gathering the next day, the leaders would surely start by asking about the gospel work, so I quickly went to the sister I worked with to find out about the progress of the gospel work so I wouldn’t be completely clueless when the leaders asked about it the next day. But there were many details involved in the gospel work, and they couldn’t be explained clearly in just a few words, and with the time being so tight, I didn’t learn much. I felt anxious, and I lay in bed unable to sleep for a long time, my mind filled with thoughts about the gathering the next day. On the day of the gathering, I arrived early and I was pleased to find out that the leaders hadn’t arrived yet due to other matters, and I thought that I could use this time to look into the reports from each group to understand how each task was going and figure out where the problems might be, so that I could answer some of the questions the leaders might ask. So I quickly skimmed through the work reports from each group, and although I got a rough idea of how the work was going, there were still many details I didn’t grasp. I also thought that at the gathering, the leaders would not just ask about the work, but that they’d also be sure to inquire about our recent experiences and gains, and the knowledge we had gained of ourselves. I was already unable to speak much about the work details, and if I couldn’t talk about my life entry properly or fellowship anything, the leaders would surely think I had done poorly in both work and life entry, and say something like: “You can’t do anything well; how can a person like you be a church leader?” and look down on me. So, I quickly read God’s words and mulled over my state, seeking out passages to eat and drink to resolve my corrupt disposition, fearing that when the time came, if I couldn’t fellowship well, the leaders would see right through me. But I just couldn’t calm my heart, or focus on God’s words. The more I tried to reflect on and know myself, the more muddled

my mind became, and I couldn't sense the enlightenment or guidance of the Holy Spirit. I realized that my state was wrong. Wasn't I being deceitful? I then calmed myself and prayed to God, "God, my state is terrible. I feel anxious and uneasy, and my thoughts are really unclear. I know I am in the wrong state. I want to quiet my heart before You, seek Your intention, and come out of this wrong state."

At that moment, I recalled some of God's words: **"Are your goals and intentions made with Me in mind? Are all your words and actions said and done in My presence? I examine all of your thoughts and ideas. Do you not feel guilty? You put on a false front for others to see and you calmly assume an air of self-righteousness; you do this to shield yourself. You do this to conceal your evil, and you even think up ways to push that evil onto someone else. What deceitfulness dwells in your heart!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). Later, I also read these words of God: **"Antichrists are especially treacherous and cunning. Everything they say is tightly considered; no one is more adept at putting on a pretense. But once the cat is out of the bag, once people have seen them for what they really are, they do their utmost to argue for themselves, and they think of ways to remedy the situation and bluff their way through as a means to salvage their image and reputation. Antichrists live each day only for reputation and status, they live only to revel in the benefits of status, this is all they think about. Even when they do occasionally suffer some minor hardship or pay some trivial price, this is for the sake of obtaining status and reputation. Pursuing status, holding power, and having an easy life are major things that antichrists always scheme for once they believe in God, and they don't give up until they achieve their goals. If their evil deeds are ever exposed, they panic, as if the sky is**

about to fall on them. They can't eat or sleep, and they seem to be in a trance, as if they are suffering from depression. When people ask them what was wrong, they make up lies and say, 'Yesterday I was so busy that I didn't sleep all night, so I'm very tired.' But actually, none of this is true, it is all deception. They feel this way because they are constantly pondering, 'The bad things I did have been exposed, so how can I restore my reputation and status? What means can I use to redeem myself? What tone can I use with everyone to explain this? What can I say to keep people from seeing through me?' For a long time, they can't figure out what to do, and so they are depressed. Sometimes their eyes stare blankly at a single spot, and no one knows what they are looking at. The issue makes them rack their brains, exhaust every train of thought, and not want to eat or drink. Despite this, they still put on the appearance of caring about church work, and ask people, 'How is the gospel work going? How effectively is it being preached? Have the brothers and sisters gained any life entry recently? Has anyone been causing any disruptions or disturbances?' These inquiries of theirs about the church's work are meant as a show for others. If they did learn of problems, they would have no way to resolve them, so their questions are a mere formality that others are liable to see as care for **the church's work**' (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). The judgment of God's words distressed and upset me. I saw just how deceitful I was. I had been really selfish in my duty, focused solely on my own work for the sake of reputation and status, while hardly ever inquiring about other work. I didn't do any actual work at all. I knew that my actions were not in line with God's intentions, and that I wasn't being a team player, but I didn't seek the truth principles to resolve these issues. Additionally, I knew that I usually didn't pay much attention to my life entry, nor could I

fellowship much actual experiential knowledge. When the leaders hadn't asked me to a gathering, I didn't think much of it, feeling that even if I did have problems, the leaders wouldn't know, so I wasn't in a hurry to resolve them. But as soon as I heard that the leaders were going to ask me to a gathering, I immediately became nervous, fearing that my problems would be exposed at the gathering, and that once the leaders found out about these, they would surely think I lacked a sense of burden in my duties, didn't do actual work, and that my caliber and life entry were poor. Since I had just started my duty as a leader, and the upper leaders weren't too familiar with me, if I left a bad impression on them at our first meeting, they would surely not value me in the future and might even dismiss me. To protect my reputation and status, I tried every possible way to cover up my issues. Before the gathering, I hurried to find the sister I worked with to look into the details of the work, and I also wanted to disguise myself and deceive the leaders by skimming the reports in advance to acquaint myself with the work. I wanted to create a false impression that I had strong work capabilities and paid close attention to my life entry, so that others would give me a good evaluation. I already lacked a sense of burden for my duty and did not pursue the truth, yet I was also in constant fear of others seeing through me, so I constructed a false image and disguised myself. Wasn't this blatant and shameless deception? I saw that I was truly deceitful. I was acting just like an antichrist. Antichrists are particularly cunning, and use everything at their disposal to protect their reputation and status when they see them being harmed. Wasn't this what I was doing? When things didn't encroach on my reputation or status, I ignored other church work and didn't pay any attention to my life entry. But once something touched on my status and reputation, I became frantic, reading God's words and trying to understand the work, appearing as if I were diligent in my pursuit. I was

truly cunning and deceitful. Wasn't the disposition I revealed that of an antichrist?

Later, I read these words of God: **“You must walk the correct path as you believe in God and conduct yourselves, and do not engage in crooked and evil ways. What are crooked and evil ways? Believers in God always want to rely on little schemes, on deceptive and crafty games, and on playing tricks, to cover up their own corruption, their defects and faults, and problems like their own poor caliber; they always deal with matters according to satanic philosophies, which they think isn't too bad. On surface-level matters, they fawn over God and their leaders, but they do not practice the truth, nor do they act according to principles. They carefully weigh the words and expressions of others, always pondering: ‘How has my performance been recently? Does everyone support me? Does God know about all the good things I have done? If He knows, will He praise me? What is my position in God's heart? Am I important there?’ The implication is, as someone who believes in God, will they obtain blessings, or will they be eliminated? Is always pondering these matters not a crooked and evil way? This is indeed a crooked and evil way, not the right way. So then what is the right way? (To pursue the truth and a change of disposition.) That's right. For those who believe in God, the only right way is to pursue the truth, obtain the truth, and achieve a change of disposition. Only the way in which God leads people to attain salvation is the true way, the right way”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). After reading God's words, I felt thoroughly judged. I saw that I was always trying to use tricks to cover up my problems in my duties. This was a crooked and evil way of doing things and I wasn't walking the right path. Actually, it was perfectly normal for the leaders to

invite me to a gathering to look into the work. I should just say how I usually acted. If they point out how I am deficient or falling short in some areas, I should make up for these things in my future duties, and even if I am pruned, it will help me reflect and enter in so that I can do my duty better. However, I resorted to deceit, and did whatever I could to cover up my problems and bluff past and deceive the leaders. I was unwilling to let them see my corruption and deficiencies. Wasn't I engaging in crooked and evil practices by doing this? When a person who truly pursues the truth realizes they are being selfish and despicable and are only concerned about their own tasks in their duty, they are able to promptly seek the truth to resolve their states. When the leaders inquire about their work, they can face this calmly and correct their deviations. Moreover, people who genuinely focus on life entry should pay attention to their thoughts and ideas in daily life, and seek the truth to resolve them in a timely manner, instead of just equipping themselves with God's words when a gathering with the leaders is imminent. But I tried to create a façade to deceive the leaders. I was engaging in deceit and trickery by doing so. Wasn't I trying to deceive God and curry favor with the leaders? I saw that I wasn't a person who practices or pursues the truth at all.

Later, I also reflected why I could brazenly deceive, and couldn't accept God's scrutiny. Many times, I also knew that I should be honest and live before God, accepting God's scrutiny, yet when faced with situations, I still involuntarily resorted to deceit. Why is that? Later, I read these words of God: **"Isn't life exhausting for deceitful people? They spend all their time telling lies, then telling more lies to cover them up, and engaging in trickery. They bring this exhaustion upon themselves. They know that living like this is exhausting—so why would they still want to be deceitful, and not wish to be honest? Have you ever thought about this**

question? This is a consequence of people being fooled by their satanic natures; it stops them from ridding themselves of this kind of life, this kind of disposition. People are willing to accept being fooled like this and to live in this; they do not want to practice the truth and walk the path of light. You think that living like this is exhausting and that acting this way is unnecessary—but deceitful people think it absolutely necessary. They think that to not do so would cause them humiliation, that it would harm their image, their reputation, and their interests, too, and that they would lose too much. They treasure these things, they treasure their own image, their own reputation and status. This is the true face of people who do not love the truth. In short, when people are unwilling to be honest or practice the truth, it is because they do not love the truth. In their hearts, they treasure things like reputation and status, they like to follow worldly trends, and live under the power of Satan. This is a problem of their nature. There are people, now, who have believed in God for years, who have heard many sermons, and know what believing in God is all about. But they still do not practice the truth, and have not changed one bit—why is this? It’s because they do not love the truth. Even if they do understand a little of the truth, they are still not able to practice it. For such people, no matter how many years they believe in God, it will be for naught” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person).

Through the exposure of God’s words, I came to understand that my unwillingness to be an honest person stemmed from my nature, which did not love the truth and cherished reputation and status too much. Even though I knew that it was exhausting to live deceitfully, when I thought about how being an honest person could damage my reputation and status, I felt unwilling to practice the truth, and was involuntarily fooled and harmed

by Satan. During this period, I didn't do any real work or focus on life entry. When the leaders invited me to a gathering, I should have been an honest person and faced it calmly, owned up to the fact that I was not doing real work, and accepted the leaders' guidance and help. But I feared that doing so would make the leaders think I lacked a sense of burden for my duties, giving them a bad impression of me and leading them not to value me, or even replace me. Thinking about these things, I lost the courage to be an honest person, as I felt that being honest would bring too many losses upon me. I didn't practice the truth or conduct myself as an honest person, and I was constantly trying to protect my reputation and status, living by the satanic poisons like "People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark," and "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies." These poisons had become deeply rooted in my heart, becoming my law of survival. To avoid leaving a bad impression on the leaders, I created a façade to disguise myself. I knew that I was being perfunctory and deceitful with the leaders, and I felt uneasy, but to avoid losing face, I still couldn't help but resort to deceit. These satanic poisons were like shackles, tightly binding me, making it hard for me to break free. Even though I was well aware of the truth, I couldn't put it into practice. I saw that I often practiced deceit in my duties for the sake of reputation and status. Sometimes when the upper leadership inquired about the work, even when I hadn't done certain tasks, I'd lie that I had done them to maintain a good image in their hearts, and then scramble to make up for it. Other times, when I didn't grasp the details of the work, I would quickly change the topic when the leaders asked, talking about plans to come in order to cover up my not doing actual work. I saw that even though I had believed in God for many years and eaten and drunk a lot of His words, I still valued reputation and status above all else. Though I knew that pursuing these

things disgusted God, I still couldn't help but pursue them. In my nature I truly have no love for the truth and I am averse to the truth. I also realized that to practice the truth and be an honest person, one must forsake their interests and abandon the pursuit of reputation and status. Living by relying on a deceitful disposition means one can't live openly or with integrity, and that a person ultimately loses their dignity and integrity, and ends up being loathed and disgusted by God. Realizing this, I truly despised myself, and I didn't want to live for reputation or status anymore.

Later, I read these words of God: **“Today, most people are too afraid to bring their actions before God; while you may deceive His flesh, you cannot deceive His Spirit. Any matter that cannot withstand God’s scrutiny is at odds with the truth, and should be cast aside; to do otherwise is to commit a sin against God. So, you must lay your heart before God at all times, when you pray, when you speak and fellowship with your brothers and sisters, and when you perform your duty and go about your business. When you fulfill your function, God is with you, and so long as your intent is correct and is for the work of God’s house, He will accept all that you do; you should sincerely devote yourself to fulfilling your function”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Perfects Those Who Accord With His Intentions). From God’s words, I understood that those who believe in God should accept God’s scrutiny and live before Him. But in my faith and in my duty, I had been unable to accept God’s scrutiny. I always wanted to rely on human means to hoodwink and deceive the leaders, and I thought that as long as people didn’t find out about my problems, everything would be fine, as if deceiving people meant that God wouldn’t know, and that by doing this I’d be able to protect both my status and duties. Was I not trying to deceive both myself and others? It may have seemed like I was just trying to

deceive the leaders, but in essence, I was trying to deceive God, and there was no place for God at all in my heart. The truth is, God scrutinizes everything. He scrutinizes my every thought, idea, and action, and while I brazenly tried to deceive God and people and engaged in secretly underhanded activities, God saw it all clearly. God knew how I did my duties and whether I pursued the truth. If I'd had a place for God in my heart, I would have focused on living before God and accepting His scrutiny in all things. Wherever my work fell short, I should have corrected it immediately and faced my deficiencies honestly. But in doing my duties as I'd done them, neglecting various aspects of work and constantly trying to cover up with tricks, what good was people's good opinion of me? The issues in my duties remained unresolved, and my deceitful disposition remained unchanged. This disgusted and displeased God. Wasn't this an enormous loss and utter foolishness? I wasn't doing real work in my duties, my life entry was poor, and I revealed many corrupt dispositions. I should have focused on repenting to God and on how to do my duties well. This should have been the attitude I had!

Later on, I began to seek how to act in line with God's intentions. I read these words of God: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself**

for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God’s words provided me with a path of practice. No matter what problems arise, one needs to seek the truth to resolve them. To enter the truth, the first step is to open up, and no matter what corrupt disposition is revealed, one must lay themselves bare and be an honest person before God and other people. A person should not conceal anything to maintain their reputation or status. They must speak the truth, without deceit or trickery. Only by doing so can they live freely and meet with God’s approval. I also realized that living in a satanic corrupt disposition, always caring about others’ opinions, and constantly lying and deceiving made life exhausting and undignified. I no longer wanted to live for the sake of fame, gains, and status. I became willing to accept God’s scrutiny and live before Him. Regardless of others’ views or opinions of me, I just wanted to do my duties to satisfy God. With this in mind, my heart was filled with a great sense of ease, and I no longer worried about the upper leadership looking into my work, nor did I want to try to deceive God or other people anymore.

On the day of the gathering, the leaders arrived late and asked how I had followed up on the gospel work. My heart pounded, and I still felt a bit

anxious, fearing that the leaders would think poorly of me if they knew the facts of the situation. Then I remembered these words of God: **“You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). My heart was filled with a great sense of ease, and I no longer wanted to do things for the sake of reputation or status. So I spoke honestly and openly to the leaders. I admitted that I had been selfish and despicable, and that I had been failing to follow up on the overall work, and that even though I hadn’t followed up on the work, I’d still tried to deceive others. Having heard what I said, the leaders didn’t prune me. Instead, they fellowshiped with me on how to cooperate harmoniously to do the church work well. Hearing their fellowship, my heart brightened and I gained a path of practice. When they asked about my state later on, I also openly fellowshiped that I had been working for reputation and status, living in a selfish and despicable state, but that I was willing to seek the truth to make amends. After saying that, I felt steady and at ease in my heart. I have realized that when my thoughts are focused on what people think of me and on my status in their hearts, I cannot help but be fooled by Satan, resort to deceit and trickery, and live my life in a painful and exhausting way. But when I don’t consider people’s opinions and only want to act according to God’s words and be an honest person, my state keeps improving, I feel that I am living before God, and my heart feels truly liberated.

8. I Will Never Regret This Choice

By Xiao Yuan, China

From an early age, I always got good grades and would often get the highest grade on tests in my class. Each time grades came out for a test, my name and picture would always be displayed on the school's honors board. Seeing how my teachers looked at me with smiling eyes full of satisfaction and commendation and hearing the praises of my classmates, my heart would burst with joy and I would feel so honored. Upon returning home, neighbors I encountered in the streets would greet me saying, "This girl is a great student. You make your parents so proud. In the future you'll certainly go to Peking University or Tsinghua University!" I would give them a shy smile, but inside, my ego had been thoroughly stoked. Later on, I tested into a top university in my province and was ranked number one in my major as a freshman. I felt so happy—my classmates all praised my talent, admired and envied me and my teachers placed high hopes in me. I felt like I had become a standout among my peers. However, university life wasn't as busy as high school and would oftentimes be downright easy and carefree. In classes we often had to study some social science theories and rote memorize these theories and terminology and I would sometimes wonder: "What is the point of learning and memorizing all these theories?" Most of the time I just studied purely to be able to handle the tests. Outside of class and in their free time, my classmates just idled away their time in pleasure, while I would just sit around scrolling on my phone, bored to death. I would often think, "Were we really put on this earth just to kill time like this? Shouldn't we as humans have some goal or direction in life?" However, I didn't know how to answer these questions.

In the summer of my freshman year, a sister spread God's last days' gospel to me. Through eating and drinking God's words, I learned that God performed three stages of work to save mankind. I saw how the Lord Jesus was crucified to redeem mankind of their sins and, in the last days, God incarnated again to thoroughly save mankind, expressing many truths to judge and purify mankind, allowing them to completely break free of the fetters of sin and enter God's kingdom. I got a deep sense of the sincerity and kindness with which God saved mankind as well as a feeling for God's love of mankind. I was deeply moved and resolved to put faith in God and pursue the truth. Later on, my brothers and sisters fellowshiped on how it was a crucial time for the expansion of the kingdom gospel. They said it was an incredibly valuable thing to be able to contribute to the expansion of the gospel and bring more people before God to receive His salvation. A sister then asked if I would be willing to do a duty. I felt a bit hesitant, "It takes time and energy to do a duty. Competition at school is quite strong and what will I do if my grades are affected? Should I choose to put my faith in God and do my duty as a created being or put my time into studies to get good grades and ensure a good future and the admiration and respect of others?" I didn't know which path to choose and so I told the sister I would think it over. For the next few nights, I would often find myself at a loss as I walked along a road at my university, observing other students working hard late into the night to achieve good grades, wondering, "Should I choose to pursue academics and a good future like most of my peers, or follow God and do a duty?"

Later on, I came across these passages of God's words: **"Because of the Creator's sovereignty and predestination, a lonely soul that started out with nothing to its name gains parents and a family, the chance to become a member of the human race, the chance to experience human**

life and see the world. This soul also gains the chance to experience the Creator's sovereignty, to know the marvelousness of the Creator's creation, and more than that, to know and surrender to the Creator's authority. Yet most people do not really seize this rare and fleeting opportunity. One exhausts a lifetime's worth of energy fighting against fate, spends all of one's time bustling about, trying to feed one's family and shuttling back and forth between wealth and status. The things that people treasure are family, money, and fame and gain, and they view these as the most valuable things in life. All people complain about being ill-fated, yet still they push to the back of their minds the issues that are most imperative to examine and understand: why man is alive, how man should live, what the value and meaning of life are. They spend their entire lives, however long they may last, merely rushing about seeking fame and gain, until their youth has fled and they have become gray and wrinkled. They live in this way until they see that fame and gain cannot stop their slide toward senility, that money cannot fill the emptiness of the heart, that no one is exempt from the laws of birth, aging, sickness, and death, that no one can escape what fate has in store. Only when they have to confront life's final juncture do they truly grasp that even if one owns vast wealth and extensive assets, even if one is privileged and of high rank, one still cannot escape death and must return to their original position: a solitary soul, with nothing to its name" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). "Everything in man's life is empty and unworthy of commemoration, apart from believing in God, pursuing the truth, and fulfilling their duty as a created being. Even if you have accomplished the most earth-shaking of feats; even if you have been to the Moon and back; even if you have made scientific advances that have been of some benefit or

help to mankind, it is futile and all of it will pass away. What is the only thing that will not pass away? (The word of God.) Only the word of God, testimonies to God, all of the testimonies and works that bear witness for the Creator, and people's good deeds will not pass away. These things will last forever, and they are so valuable" (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in Performing the Duty of a Created Being Well Is There Value in Living). God's words had a deep impact on me. God arranges for each person to come to this world to recognize God's sovereignty, understand His wisdom and authority, and learn to submit to and worship God. If people do not realize God's intention, their time in this world will be empty—they won't know why they are born, why they must pass or what they should live for. I would often see news reports about famous people who, despite receiving adulation, making lots of money and living in luxury, developed depression and ultimately committed suicide. Other stories detailed how rich people with high status suddenly became ill and died. I also observed how my own grandparents, who were intellectuals with advanced degrees, had worked hard their whole lives and had once had their moments of glory now spent their retirement years chatting, killing time, emptily passing their days without knowing the meaning of life, and aimlessly awaiting death. I saw that no matter how much one studies or what great accomplishments one achieves, it is all transient and impermanent. Ultimately, when the evil, old world is destroyed, everything will be laid to waste. These scientific achievements and personal accomplishments cannot guide people toward an understanding of God, to come before God and come to know the meaning of life. They also cannot allow people to cast off their corruption and live out a human semblance—even after achieving these accomplishments, they are still as corrupt as ever. What's more, knowledge is completely incapable of changing the dark state

of society and fails to put people on the right path and direction. Knowledge and achievements just aren't meaningful. Only God's chosen people's testimony to God and what they gain from experiencing God's work are eternal. If I were to invest myself in seeking knowledge, pursuing the fruits of this mortal world and rushing around after fame and gain, family, academics and a career, failed to pursue the truth and know God, and ultimately failed to comprehend any truth, failed to gain knowledge of God and my disposition did not transform, would I have not lost out on a golden opportunity to experience God's work? God had guided me to find my direction in life: I realized that in life we ought to pursue the truth and pursue knowledge of God. Only by fulfilling my duty as a created being would I be worthy of God's salvation and only such a life would be valuable and meaningful. It was my responsibility and an exaltation by God to be able to put my effort into expanding the gospel and bring more people before God. I had to stop wasting time on my studies and decided to make faith my priority. After that, I gave up my chance at guaranteed admission to graduate studies and decided to do my duty.

At the beginning of 2020, the pandemic hit while I was passing the Chinese New Year at home and I ended up getting stuck there and being unable to contact my church. For half a year, I was unable to attend gatherings or eat and drink God's words. I was a senior at that time and getting ready to graduate. Some of my classmates had already been accepted to graduate programs, while others had found good jobs. As for me, I still hadn't found a job. My father would often sternly exhort me, saying, "So and so's child just got accepted to a graduate program at a famous school. These days, getting a graduate degree is the current trend and it will make you more competitive in the job market. You should have decided to get a graduate degree anyway, but you wouldn't listen to us. If

you don't get a job soon what do you plan to do after you graduate?" Hearing the exhortations of my father and seeing how all my peers were working hard for a better future, I thought to myself, "He's right, I'm about to graduate. Do I really want to be jobless after I graduate? What will people think of me? Won't they think I'm good for nothing?" I felt absolutely miserable. One time at a get together with former classmates, everyone began talking about their future plans: Some excitedly said they had been accepted to some or other famous university's graduate program, others got jobs at SOEs, while others had gotten jobs as government employees. They lavished praise on each other and talked about their experiences before and after being accepted, but as for me, I had nothing to say. Seeing the prestige of my peers, how their faces were lit up with smiles and pride, I couldn't help but lower my head in silent despair, thinking, "I used to have even better grades than them and they all looked up to and admired me, but now they're graduate students at top schools and I only have a bachelor's degree. They're so far ahead of me, so how can I hold my head high in front of them going forward? Hasn't my image and esteem in their eyes plummeted now?" It felt like I had been enveloped in gloom. When my classmates asked me what my plans were going forward, I just stammered and awkwardly ducked out of their questioning, afraid to see their disapproving glances. Throughout the get-together I felt incredibly repressed—I thought I hadn't accomplished anything and my classmates would certainly look down on me. After coming home, I broke down in tears. From an early age, I had always been admired and commended by others, but now I was lagging far behind them and that massive gap of feeling between now and before dealt a difficult blow. I wasn't sure what path I should take going forward. Given my current academic credentials, there was no way I was going to get a respectable job. Did I just have to

resign myself to being a cut below those graduate students? I couldn't accept that, so I resolved that I would take the graduate entrance exam.

Later on, I got in touch with my church and told the brothers and sisters that I was preparing to go home and take the graduate entrance exam, but would still attend gatherings when I could. The brothers and sisters told me that they needed more people to do a certain duty and asked if I would consider doing it. At the time, I knew that believing in God and pursuing the truth were good things and that by failing to do my duty, I would be letting down God, who had supplied me with so much, but then I thought about how there were only a few months left to prepare for the entrance exam and this was my last chance to save face. Being accepted to the springboard of a graduate program was the only way I could remain on the same level with those highly credentialed classmates, fulfill the expectations of my family, and be able to hold my head high around my friends and relatives. If I gave up on taking the graduate entrance exam, wouldn't I lose all hope of distinguishing myself among my peers? I just wasn't willing to do that. Thus, I told my brothers and sisters that I couldn't do a duty full time and could only do as much work in a duty as I could while also preparing for the exam. I was under a lot of pressure and stress for the next few months. During the day, I would do my duty or attend gatherings, then I would return home at night to thick stacks of test preparation materials. I was so tired, but I forced myself to keep my eyes open and power through whatever study assignments I had given myself for that day. Every morning at the crack of dawn, I would get up right away regardless of how tired I felt and dive right back into that deep sea of knowledge. I didn't dare give myself the slightest chance to relax—even when I went out to buy food, while cooking or cleaning dishes, I would put on audio files to continue studying. Then, finally, after several difficult

months of preparation, I tested into a graduate program. I was so excited when I saw my test score—now I could finally get back some of that prestige I had once had, hold my head high amongst my relatives and friends and stop worrying about others looking down on me. When my classmates heard I had tested into a graduate program, they all showered me with congratulations. My dad was so happy that he was smiling from ear to ear and couldn't wait to tell the good news to all our neighbors and relatives. When I returned home, my neighbors all gave me the thumbs-up and praised me, saying, "You got into a graduate program, way to go! You've been a talented student from an early age. Your dad must be so proud of you!" I felt so pleased with myself and could finally hold my head high.

In no time, the school year had started and I balanced my time between studies and doing my duty, but graduate students had to take several classes per day and complete homework in their free time, so I didn't have any time to practice devotionals and read God's words. Sometimes I would realize that I was revealing corruption in my duty, but I didn't have time to reflect on myself and would feel agitated and miserable. Sometimes I would think, "How will my life progress if I don't have any time to read God's words and seek the truth? However, my homework kept piling up and I had to complete it. What's more, my classmates were studying and researching even harder, putting in all their efforts to increase their abilities and level—if I didn't make time to study, wouldn't I fall behind them and never distinguish myself?" This made me worried and tormented—why was it that I still wasn't happy after testing into the graduate program of my dreams?

One night, my school announced that it would be sealing off the campus due to the pandemic, so starting in a few days, students that entered

the campus would not be able to leave whenever they felt like it. I realized it was time for me to make a decision. If I decided to continue my studies, I wouldn't be able to practice faith and do my duty. If I was to put aside my duty and was unable to attend gatherings at such an important moment, my life would certainly be damaged. What's more, if I spent all my time at the school and couldn't attend gatherings, I would certainly put everything into seeking a future in the secular world and it would be difficult to walk away from that. If I didn't attain the truth, my views on things were not transformed and I ended up wallowing in the mire with other nonbelievers and pursuing evil trends, I would ultimately be a living image of Satan and would be doomed to perdition and destruction. The disasters had already begun and it was also a crucial moment for the expansion of the gospel—if I carried on with worldly pursuits and didn't do my duty and prepare good deeds at all, I certainly would not receive God's care and protection and would be swept up in the disasters just like all the other nonbelievers. Yet, I couldn't give up my studies either; it had been no easy feat to test into the program, so how could I just withdraw so easily? If I did withdraw, wouldn't I lose my prestige and fame again? Then wouldn't I be a cut below my peers, live a repressed life and be unable to raise my head with pride? When I considered withdrawing, I felt so miserable that I didn't feel like doing anything. Every morning when I awoke, I would think of the choices laid out before me and sink into distress.

Later on, I came across a passage of God's words: **“God does not merely pay a price for each person in the decades from their birth to the present. As God sees it, you have come into this world countless times, and have been reincarnated countless times. Who is in charge of this? God is in charge of this. You have no way of knowing these things. Each time you come into this world, God personally makes**

arrangements for you: He arranges how many years you will live, the sort of family that you will be born into, when you will build a home and a career, as well as what you will do in this world and how you will make a living. God arranges a way for you to earn a living, so that you can accomplish your mission in this life unhindered. And as for what you should do in your next incarnation, God arranges and delivers that life to you according to what you ought to have and what ought to be given to you.... God has made these arrangements for you many times, and, at last, you were born into the age of the last days, into your present family. God arranged an environment for you in which you could believe in Him, He allowed you to hear His voice and come back before Him, so that you could follow Him and perform a duty in His house. It is only with such guidance from God that you have lived until today. You do not know how many times you have been born among man, nor how many times your appearance has changed, nor how many families you have had, nor how many ages and dynasties you have lived through—but God’s hand has been supporting you the whole time, and He has always been watching over you. How much God toils for a person’s sake! Some people say, ‘I’m sixty years old. For sixty years, God has been watching over me, protecting me, and guiding me. If, when I’m old, I can’t perform a duty and I can’t do anything—will God still care about me?’ Is this not a silly thing to say? God does not have sovereignty over a person’s fate, and watch over them and protect them for just a single lifespan. If it were just the matter of a single lifespan, a single lifetime, that would fail to demonstrate that God is almighty and has sovereignty over everything. The labor that God does and the price that He pays for a person is not merely to arrange what they do in this life, but to arrange for them a

countless number of lifetimes. God takes full responsibility for every soul that is reincarnated. He works attentively, paying the price of His life, guiding every person and arranging each of their lives. God toils and pays a price in this way for man's sake, and He bestows upon man all of these truths and this life. If people do not perform the duty of created beings in these final days, and they do not return before the Creator—if, in the end, no matter how many lives and generations they have lived through, they do not do their duties well and they fail to meet God's demands—would their debt to God not then be too great? Would they not be unworthy of all the prices God has paid? They would be so lacking in conscience, they would not deserve to be called people, as their debt to God would be too great. Therefore, in this life—I am not talking about your former lives, but in this life—if you are not able to give up the things you love or external things for the sake of your mission—like material pleasures and the love and joy of family—if you do not give up the pleasures of the flesh for the sake of the prices that God pays for you or to repay God's love, then you are truly wicked! Actually, any price that you pay for God is worth it. Compared to the price that God pays on your behalf, what does the tiny amount that you offer up or expend amount to? What does the little you suffer amount to? Do you know how much God has suffered? The little that you suffer is not even worth mentioning when it is compared to what God has suffered. Moreover, by doing your duty now, you are obtaining the truth and the life, and in the end, you will survive and enter into God's kingdom. What a great blessing that is! While you follow God, no matter whether you suffer or pay a price, you are actually working with God. Whatever God asks us to do, we listen to God's words, and practice according to them. Do not rebel against God or do anything

that brings Him sorrow. In order to work with God, you must suffer a little, and you must renounce and lay aside some things. You must give up fame, gain, status, money, and worldly pleasures—you even need to give up things like marriage, work, and your prospects in the world. Does God know whether you have given up these things? Can God see all this? (Yes.) What will God do when He sees that you have given up these things? (God will be comforted, and He will be pleased.) God will not only be pleased and say, ‘The prices that I paid have borne fruit. People are willing to work alongside Me, they have this resolve, and I have gained them.’ Whether God is pleased or happy, satisfied or comforted, God does not only have that attitude. He also acts, and He wants to see the results that His work achieves, otherwise what He requires of people would be meaningless. The grace, love, and mercy that God shows man are not merely a kind of attitude—they are a fact, as well. What fact is that? It is that God puts His words within you, enlightening you, so that you may see what is lovely about Him, and what this world is all about, so that your heart is filled with light, allowing you to understand His words and the truth. In this way, without knowing it, you gain the truth. God does so much work on you in a very real way, enabling you to gain the truth. When you gain the truth, when you gain that most precious thing which is eternal life, God’s intentions are satisfied. When God sees that people are pursuing the truth and willing to cooperate with Him, He is happy and contented. He is then of an attitude, and while He is of that attitude, He goes to work, and approves of and blesses man. He says, ‘I will reward you with the blessings that you deserve.’ And then you will have gained the truth and the life. When you have knowledge of the Creator and you have gained His appreciation, will you still feel an emptiness in

your heart? You will not. You will feel fulfilled and have a sense of enjoyment. Is this not what it means for one's life to have value? This is the most valuable and meaningful life" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Paying the Price to Gain the Truth Is of Great Significance). Through God's words, I realized that it was He who had guided and protected me every step of the way on my path to the current moment. God had not allowed me to be born in the last days and be lucky enough to accept His last days' work just so I could go pursue prospects and a career. No, He wanted me to receive the supply of His words, come to understand the truth, and fulfill my duty as a created being. The family and work that God arranges for people is just temporary. If I rejected God's salvation and refused to do my duty as a created being just so that I could live up to my family's expectations or attain a level of material enjoyment, fame and gain, wouldn't I be unworthy of God's supply and lose a wonderful chance to be saved? If I decided to do my duty, I might relinquish certain personal interests, but I would attain the most precious truth and would ultimately attain God's salvation and survive—these were the most tangible benefits of all! After realizing this, I was very moved and motivated and felt that God was spurring me on and guiding me face-to-face. I then watched an experience testimony video called A Choice Without Regret in which a sister resolutely gives up an opportunity to study at Tsinghua University in order to practice faith and spread the gospel. In the video, when the sister spreads the gospel to her teacher, he becomes incredibly excited and bursts out in tears of joy, because he has been waiting an agonizingly long time for the Lord's coming and has finally found the gospel of God he has awaited for so long. This video had a particularly deep impact on me. I thought of all my classmates and friends who didn't understand the true meaning of life and still lived in misery under Satan's power. I was lucky enough to

have accepted God's last days' gospel, so I should bear a responsibility, pursue the truth as best I could, equip myself with truth and spread the gospel and bring even more people before God to receive His judgment, be purified, attain salvation and live with the blessings and guidance of God. How wonderful that would be! Realizing this, I decided to abandon my studies and focus on believing in God. However, when it actually came time to make my decision, it was still a bit hard for me. I thought, "If I don't continue my studies, I'll never have a chance to distinguish myself in the future." The praise from my family, relatives, friends and neighbors was a kind of prestige that I found hard to let go of.

In the midst of my suffering, I came across this passage of God's words: **"During the process of man's learning of knowledge, Satan employs all manner of methods, whether it be telling stories, simply giving them some individual piece of knowledge, or allowing them to satisfy their desires or ambitions. What road does Satan want to lead you down? People think there is nothing wrong with learning knowledge, that it is entirely natural. To put it in a way that sounds appealing, to foster lofty ideals or to have ambitions is to have drive, and this should be the right path in life. Is it not a more glorious way for people to live if they can realize their own ideals, or successfully establish a career? By doing these things, one can not only honor one's ancestors but also has the chance to leave one's mark on history—is this not a good thing? This is a good thing in the eyes of worldly people, and to them it should be proper and positive. Does Satan, however, with its sinister motives, take people on to this kind of road and that's all there is to it? Of course not. In fact, no matter how lofty man's ideals are, no matter how realistic man's desires are or how proper they may be, all that man wants to achieve, all that man seeks for, is inextricably**

linked to two words. These two words are vitally important to the life of every person, and they are things Satan intends to instill in man. What are these two words? They are 'fame' and 'gain.' Satan uses a very subtle kind of method, a method very much in concert with people's notions, which is not at all radical, through which it causes people to unknowingly accept its way of living, its rules to live by, and to establish life goals and their direction in life, and unknowingly they also come to have ambitions in life. No matter how grand these life ambitions may seem, they are inextricably linked to 'fame' and 'gain.' Everything that any great or famous person—all people, in fact—follow in life relates only to these two words: 'fame' and 'gain.' People think that once they have fame and gain, they can then capitalize on those things to enjoy high status and great wealth, and to enjoy life. They think fame and gain are a kind of capital that they can use to obtain a life of pleasure-seeking and wanton enjoyment of the flesh. For the sake of this fame and gain which mankind so covets, people willingly, albeit unknowingly, hand over their bodies, minds, all that they have, their futures and their destinies, to Satan. They do so genuinely and without even a moment's hesitation, ever ignorant of the need to recover all that they have handed over. Can people retain any control over themselves once they have taken refuge in Satan in this way and become loyal to it? Certainly not. They are completely and utterly controlled by Satan. They have completely and utterly sunk into a quagmire, and are unable to free themselves. Once someone is mired in fame and gain, they no longer seek that which is bright, that which is just, or those things that are beautiful and good. This is because the seductive power that fame and gain have over people is too great; they become things for people to pursue throughout their lives and even for

all eternity without end. Is this not true?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). Through God's words, I gradually realized that those views, ideas, and survival principles like "Stand out above the rest," "Bring honor to your ancestors," and "Other pursuits are small, books excel them all," which I had always relied on came from Satan. I thought that studying hard to attain an advanced degree and being a cut above the rest was a positive goal to pursue. To achieve my goal, I worked extremely hard in my studies and was willing to persevere through any suffering. When I observed that some of my classmates were getting higher degrees or excellent jobs, I felt a cut below them and worried I'd be looked down on. To save face and be able to hold my head high in front of my peers, I let go of an opportunity to do my duty full time, choosing to put all my time and energy into preparing for the graduate entrance exam. I didn't consider the church's work or God's urgent intention to save mankind in the slightest and feared that doing a duty would delay my preparations for the test. While preparing for the test, I would spend all day and night studying, didn't give myself the slightest chance to rest and became anxious and miserable in spite of myself. It was absolutely exhausting! I saw people online discussing how after they met with failure while testing for graduate programs or looking for work, they began to suffer from anxiety and depression. A friend also told me about a student who graduated from our school that failed to test into a program and ended up in a psych ward due to the psychological torment of the whole experience. Every day at the ward he could be heard screaming, "I want to go to grad school, I want to go to grad school!" There were also many people that met with failure while testing for college or graduate degrees and ended up killing themselves because they thought they had no future prospects, no chance of attaining fame and gain and that living was meaningless. Were these vivid examples

all not the result of Satan's torment? It was just the same for me: I put everything into pursuing prospects, fame and gain, plunging into the deep abyss of fame and gain and not feeling motivated whatsoever to practice faith, pursue the truth and pursue dispositional transformation. It was only then that I truly saw Satan's sinister motives. It used fame and gain to lure me in; it not only made me suffer mentally and emotionally, but also tried to keep me from coming before God to pursue the truth and attain salvation. I thought of this passage of God's words: **"If someone's social status is very low, their family is very poor, and they have a low level of education, yet they believe in God in a down-to-earth manner, and they love the truth and positive things, then in God's eyes is their worth high or low, is it noble or lowly? They are valuable. Looking at it from this perspective, what does someone's worth—whether high or low, noble or lowly—depend on? It depends on how God sees you. If God sees you as someone who pursues the truth, then you have worth and are valuable—you are a valuable vessel. If God sees that you do not pursue the truth and you do not sincerely expend yourself for Him, then you are worthless and are not valuable—you are a lowly vessel. No matter how highly educated you are or how high your status in society is, if you don't pursue or understand the truth, then your worth can never be high; even if many people support you, praise you, and adore you, you are still a contemptible wretch. So, why does God see people this way? Why is such a 'noble' person, with such a high status in society, with so many people praising and admiring them, with even their prestige being so high, seen by God as lowly? Why is the way God sees people totally contrary to the views people have of others? Is God setting Himself against people on purpose? Absolutely not. It's because God is truth, God is righteousness, whereas man is corrupt and has no**

truth or righteousness, and God measures man by His own standard, and His standard for measuring man is the truth. It may sound a little abstract to say that, so to say it another way, God's standard of measurement is based on a person's attitude toward God, their attitude toward truth, and their attitude toward positive things—this is no longer abstract” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part One)). Through God's words, I learned that God does not measure people based upon their academic credentials or social status, but rather based on the attitude they have in their approach to the truth and God. God values those that truly believe in Him, pursue the truth and love positive things. By contrast, even if someone has high social status and is revered by others, if he doesn't accept the truth, is disrespectful to God and pursues evil and corrupt things, God will view him as lowly. After coming to understand God's intention and His standard for measuring people, I felt liberated and realized how ridiculous and inconsistent with the truth it was for me to measure people based upon their academic credentials. I also felt a sense of motivation and stopped wanting to single-mindedly pursue an advanced degree and good grades. I wanted to become someone who pursued the truth and was sure-footed and down to earth in their duties.

After that, I went to school to withdraw. My teacher continually berated me and even mocked me for not continuing graduate studies, saying I must be an idiot to not just spend two years to get my advanced degree. Faced with the teacher's mockery, I felt a bit weak. I also thought about how at the beginning of the school year, students would be overboiling with enthusiasm and ambition, ready to begin their new life as graduate students, while I was withdrawing and going in the opposite direction. If people thought I was strange and didn't understand me, would I still be able to stand firm in my position when questioned by others? I prayed to God, “Oh

God, I haven't been mocked like this before and feel quite weak. Oh God, please give me faith and allow me to be confident and brave through all of this, so that I can stand firm in my beliefs." Later on, I looked for words of God related to my current state and happened upon a hymn of God's word called **"What the Young Must Pursue."** This hymn had a deep impact on me.

Young people should not be without aspirations, should not be without the resolve to exercise discernment in issues and to seek justice and the truth. ...

1 Eyes that are full of deceit and prejudice toward others are not things that young people should have, and young people should not carry out destructive, abominable acts. They should not be without aspirations, drive, and an enthusiastic desire to better themselves; they should not be disheartened about their prospects, and nor should they lose hope in life or confidence in the future; they should have the perseverance to continue along the way of truth that they have now chosen—to realize their wish to expend their entire lives for Me.

2 They should not be without the truth, nor should they harbor hypocrisy and unrighteousness—they should stand firm in the proper stance. They should not just drift along, but should have the spirit to dare to make sacrifices and to struggle for justice and truth. Young people should have the bravery to not succumb to oppression by the forces of darkness and to transform the significance of their existence. Young people should not resign themselves to adversity, but should be open and frank, with a spirit of forgiveness for their brothers and sisters.

3 Young people should not be without the resolve to exercise discernment in issues and to seek justice and the truth. You should pursue all things beautiful and good, and you should obtain the reality

of all positive things. You should be responsible toward your life, and you must not take it lightly.

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Words for the Young and the Old

Listening to God's words, I felt like God was motivating me face to face: Do not drift along with the prevailing trends. You have recognized that following God is the right path of light, so you should resolutely follow this path. I also realized that it was with God's amazing grace that I was able to accept God's work and read the truth He expresses! Everything that comes from God is positive, while everything that people pursue in the secular world is negative. If I worried that others would not understand and support me and followed worldly trends to protect myself, wouldn't I just be wallowing in the mire with those of the secular world? With the guidance of God's words, I had the faith and bravery to hold strong to my convictions and withdrew from school.

Reflecting on my path, I recognized that it was the guidance of God's words that allowed me to see Satan's treacherous motives in using fame and gain to harm people. What's more, His words helped me break free from the dark abyss of the pursuit of fame and gain. I experienced the joy and peace that God's words brought me, and understood the good intentions with which God saves mankind. I had to cherish this rare opportunity, do my best to equip myself with truth, spread the gospel, and bear witness to God to repay His love! After that, I began doing a newcomer watering duty. Without the fetters of academic studies and the constraints of worries over future prospects, I was able to devote myself fully to my duty, and I had more time to read God's words, equip myself with truth, and learned and gained much more from my duty. Thanks be to God for His guidance and salvation!

9. I Will No Longer Feel Anxious and Worried About Aging

By Lu Yan, China

After accepting God's work in the last days, I have been doing my duty in the church. When I was in my fifties, I began doing text-based duties, and I found that my reaction speed and memory weren't much worse than those of the younger brothers and sisters, and that my efficiency and effectiveness in my duty were also pretty much the same as theirs. I was quite happy, and I felt very motivated in my duty. But as I aged, my body began to deteriorate, and I also developed high blood pressure. My physical strength and energy also gradually declined, and my mind also became more sluggish. Sometimes when I ate and drank God's words a little faster, my mind couldn't keep up, and sometimes I would forget what I had just read and would have to go back and read it again. My memory worsened, and I became very forgetful. Often, words would be on the tip of my tongue, but I couldn't remember what I wanted to say. Then I'd look at my partner, a sister in her thirties, full of energy and quick-witted. She was keen eyed and worked quickly and efficiently, and what she could finish in half an hour took me an hour and a half. I often envied her youth and energy, and at the same time, I worried about myself, thinking, "What if, in a few years, my mind becomes even slower? I fear that by then, I won't be able to do any duty and I'll become truly useless. How will I be able to gain salvation then?" Sometimes I would even complain in my heart, "Why did I only just accept God's work in the last days at such an old age? If only I were 20 years younger, how great that would be! Now I'm old, and completely useless." The truth was, I wanted to do my duty to the best of my abilities, but I was already 60 years old. My mind and eyesight weren't

what they used to be, and I had high blood pressure. If I worked a little longer at night, I'd feel very tired and have to rest early. Seeing the huge gap in efficiency in duties between myself and the younger people made me feel despondent and inferior, and I ended up living in a negative state. I no longer wanted to pay a price in my duty or focus on improving my skills. I didn't even want to reflect on my deviations to improve my work results. I thought to myself, "I'm old and useless. No matter how hard I try, I won't be able to do my duty well. Maybe one day, I'll become a complete waste of space and I'll be eliminated."

In my anxiety and worry, I read God's words: **"There are also elderly people among brothers and sisters, who are aged from 60 up to around 80 or 90 and who, because of their advanced age, also experience some difficulties. Despite their age, their thinking is not necessarily so correct or rational, and their ideas and views do not necessarily accord with the truth. These elderly people have problems just the same, and they're always worrying, 'My health isn't so good anymore and I'm limited as to what duty I can perform. If I just perform this little duty, will God remember me? Sometimes I get sick, and I need someone to look after me. When there's no one to look after me, I'm not able to perform my duty, so what can I do? I'm old and I don't remember God's words when I read them and it's hard for me to understand the truth. When fellowshipping on the truth, I speak in a muddled and illogical way, and I haven't any experiences worth sharing. I'm old and I don't have enough energy, my eyesight isn't very good and I'm not strong anymore. Everything is difficult for me. Not only can I not perform my duty, but I easily forget things and get things wrong. Sometimes I get confused and I cause problems for the church and for my brothers and sisters. I want to attain salvation and pursue the truth**

but it's very hard. What can I do?' When they think of these things, they begin to fret, thinking, 'How come I only started believing in God at this age? How come I'm not like those who are in their 20s and 30s, or even those in their 40s and 50s? How come I only came across God's work now when I'm so old? It's not that my fate is bad; at least now I've encountered God's work. My fate is good, and God has been kind to me! There's just one thing that I'm not happy about, and that is that I'm too old. My memory isn't very good, and my health isn't that great, but I have a strong heart. It's just that my body doesn't obey me, and I get sleepy after listening for a while at gatherings. Sometimes I close my eyes to pray and fall asleep, and my mind wanders when I read God's words. After reading for a bit, I get sleepy and doze off, and the words don't sink in. What can I do? With such practical difficulties, am I still able to pursue and understand the truth? If not, and if I'm not able to practice in line with the truth principles, then won't all my faith be in vain? Won't I fail to attain salvation? What can I do? I'm so worried! ...' ... These elderly people fall into deep distress, anxiety, and worry because of their age. Every time they encounter some difficulty, setback, hardship, or obstacle, they blame their age, and even hate themselves and have no liking for themselves. But in any case, it is to no avail, there is no solution, and they have no way forward. Could it be that they really have no way forward? Is there any solution? (Elderly people should also perform their duties as much as they're able.) It's acceptable for elderly people to perform their duties as much as they're able, right? Can elderly people not pursue the truth anymore because of their age? Are they not capable of understanding the truth? (Yes, they are.) Can elderly people understand the truth? They can understand some, and not even young people can understand it all,

either. Elderly people always have a misconception, believing that they're confused, that their memory is bad, and so they can't understand the truth. Are they right? (No.) Although young people have much more energy than elderly people, and are physically stronger, actually their capacity to understand, comprehend, and know is just the same as that of elderly people. Weren't elderly people once young as well? They weren't born old, and young people will all grow old one day, too. Elderly people mustn't always be thinking that because they're old, physically weak, unwell, and with bad memories, they're different from young people. In fact, there is no difference. ... it is not that elderly people have nothing to do, nor are they unable to perform their duties, much less are they unable to pursue the truth—there are many things for them to do. The various heresies and fallacies that you have accumulated during your lifetime, as well as the various traditional ideas and notions, ignorant and stubborn things, conservative things, irrational things, and distorted things that you have accumulated have all piled up in your heart, and you should spend even more time than young people to dig out, dissect, and recognize these things. It's not the case that you have nothing to do, or that you should feel distressed, anxious, and worried when you are at a loose end—this is neither your task nor your responsibility. First of all, elderly people should have the correct mindset. Although you may be getting on in years and you are relatively aged physically, still you should have a young mindset. Although you're getting old, your thinking is slowed and your memory is poor, if you can still know yourself, still understand the words I say, and still understand the truth, then that proves you are not old and that your caliber is not lacking” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). God's

words exposed my exact state. I saw that the sister I was paired with was young and did her duty efficiently, but I was older, had high blood pressure, my mind was slower, and my efficiency in my duty was much lower than hers. I thought that because I was old and useless, God would surely reject and not save me. I was living in a state of misunderstanding God. I was worried that in a few years my body would deteriorate further, and that by then, I might not be able to do any duty and would be eliminated. Thinking about this made me feel sad. But after reading God's words, I understood that God treats both young and old people equally. When God expresses truth, it isn't just for the young and not just for the old. God has never divided His chosen people into different ranks based on age, nor He has ever said that the elderly should be cleansed from the church. God doesn't show favoritism, and no matter how old a person is, they can be watered and nourished by God's words. God gives everyone an equal opportunity to be saved. If a person doesn't pursue the truth and is averse to it, they can't be saved, no matter their age. God determines a person's outcome and destination not based on age, but mainly on whether the person gains the truth. No matter how old a person is, as long as they can understand God's words and practice the truth, they can achieve a change in disposition and receive God's salvation. Although I was already sixty and learned new skills slowly, my mind was still clear, and I could still understand God's words when I ate and drank them. I could also recognize my shortcomings and corrupt disposition through God's words. God hadn't stopped enlightening and guiding me just because I'm old, and God hopes I can spend more time eating and drinking His words. God wants me to gain discernment of Satan's toxins and laws of survival, and of traditional culture. He wants me to cast off these negative things and to comport myself and act based on the truth. This is what God hopes to see. My mind

is still sound and rational now, and I can still do my duties, so I should cherish the time I have now, do my best in my duties, and pursue a change in disposition. I couldn't use my age as an excuse not to pursue the truth anymore. If I live in worry and anxiety, without a sense of burden for my duty and don't pursue a change in disposition, then I will truly become useless and will ultimately be eliminated by God.

Later on, I read more of God's words: **"Antichrists believe in God solely for the purpose of obtaining profit and blessings. Even if they endure some suffering or pay some prices, it's all in order to make a deal with God. Their intention and desire to obtain blessings and rewards is immense, and they cling to it tightly. They don't accept any of the many truths that God has expressed, in their hearts they always think that believing in God is all about obtaining blessings and securing a good destination, that this is the highest principle, and that nothing can surpass it. They think that people should not believe in God unless for the sake of gaining blessings, and that if it wasn't for the sake of blessings, belief in God would have no meaning or value, that it would lose its meaning and value. Were these ideas instilled in antichrists by someone else? Do they derive from someone else's education or influence? No, they are determined by the inherent nature essence of antichrists, which is something no one can change. Despite God incarnate speaking so many words today, antichrists don't accept any of them, but instead resist and condemn them. The nature of their being averse to the truth and hating the truth can never change. If they can't change, what does this indicate? It indicates that their nature is wicked. This is not an issue of pursuing or not pursuing the truth; this is a wicked disposition, it is brazenly clamoring against God and antagonizing God. This is the nature essence of antichrists; it is their**

true face” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). God exposes that antichrists, no matter how much suffering they endure or how much of a price they pay in their belief in God, are always trying to bargain with God for blessings. They value blessings more than the pursuit of the truth for salvation. When they can't gain blessings, they are unwilling to do any duty or pay any price. They even oppose God and complain that God is unrighteous. This is the wicked disposition of an antichrist. Reflecting on myself after accepting God's work in the last days, I saw that believing in God brought blessings and the chance to be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven, and I was happy about this, so I did my duties no matter what. When I saw that my work produced decent results, I felt that I was contributing to the church, so I thought God would surely give me a good destination. But now that I'm old and have health issues, my efficiency and results in my duties could no longer keep up with those of younger people, so I worried that as I got older, I wouldn't be able to do any duties anymore, and that I'd then be eliminated by God. Feeling that I'd lost all hope for receiving blessings, I fell into negative emotions, living in pain, worry, and negative resistance. I claimed that my efforts and expenditures were for the sake of my duties, but deep down, I was always making calculations for the sake of my outcome and destination. I was trying to use my duties to bargain with God. In essence, I was trying to manipulate and deceive God. I saw just how truly selfish and despicable I'd been! I thought of how God has expressed millions of words to save humanity, and about how fortunate I am to have come before God's presence, and to have enjoyed so much of the nourishment of God's word and to have gained discernment about negative things. I came to understand the value and meaning of life as a created being and gained the opportunity to be saved. I no longer lived in the emptiness of striving for gains and

pleasurable indulgence like nonbelievers. Because of my duty, I can live before God, and this has spared me from so much of Satan's harm. Now, even though I'm older and have high blood pressure, I don't have any severe symptoms, and so long as I maintain a regular routine, I don't need medication to do my duties normally. Isn't this God's grace upon me? Yet, even after enjoying God's love, I didn't repay it and instead used my duties to try and bargain with God. I was truly lacking in conscience and reason! I came before God and repented, "Oh God, I've always tried to bargain with You in my duties, pursuing blessings, and making You despise and loathe me. I am willing to truly repent to You."

Later, I read another passage of God's words and found a path of practice. Almighty God says: **"Besides being able to perform their duty well to the best of their abilities, there are many things elderly people can do. Unless you're stupid, demented, and cannot understand the truth, and unless you're unable to take care of yourself, there are many things you should do. Just like young people, you can pursue the truth, you can seek the truth, and you should often come before God to pray, seek the truth principles, strive to view people and things and comport yourself and act wholly according to God's words, with the truth as your criterion. This is the path you should follow, and you should not feel distressed, anxious, or worried because you're old, because you have many ailments, or because your body is aging. Feeling distress, anxiety, and worry is not the right thing to do—they are irrational manifestations"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). From God's words, I understood that in addition to correctly facing the natural laws of aging, sickness, and death established by God, the elderly should often come before God to pray and seek Him, treating the people, events and things that arise based on the truth principles, focusing on

practicing the truth to satisfy God. They shouldn't feel inferior because they're older and less capable than younger people, nor should they feel constrained by their age. They should do their duties to the best of their ability, considering their energy and physical condition. This is the mindset that the elderly should have. Realizing this, I also became able to properly face my age and shortcomings. Bearing in mind that I was older and tended to forget things, I made notes in advance of the work I needed to do so I didn't delay my work. In terms of specialized skills, younger people can remember things after learning them once, while I have a poor memory and understand things more slowly. Because of this, I put in more effort, and if I couldn't learn them after one time, I would study them three more times. I shouldn't keep comparing myself to younger people, but should instead pursue the truth and strive to do my duties to the best of my ability. I then thought of God's words: **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). From God's words, I understood that God's determination of a person's outcome and destination isn't based on their age, nor is it based on how much suffering a person has endured, but rather on whether they have gained the truth and whether their disposition has changed. If I don't pursue the truth and don't relinquish my desire for blessings, and my corrupt disposition doesn't change, then even if I were twenty years younger, I would still be eliminated. I don't want to hold on to my fallacious views any longer, and I only wish to seek to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, to do my duties well while I live, to pursue a

change in disposition, and in the end, even if I don't have a good outcome, I should still fulfill my duties. This is the conscience and reason one should have and the direction I should pursue.

I remember one time, we gathered to study work-related skills regarding the problems at hand, but there were some issues that I didn't quite understand yet. When my partnered sister started to fellowship her insights, and her fellowship was quite good, my negative emotions resurfaced, and I thought, "I am older now and it takes so long for me to understand things, if in another two years I become even more dull, then I won't be able to do any duties at all." These thoughts made me feel uncomfortable. But at that moment, I recalled God's words: **"Whether you are physically capable of performing your duty or not, whether you can take on any work or not, whether your health permits you to perform your duty or not, your heart must not stray from God, and you must not abandon your duty in your heart. In this way, you will fulfill your responsibilities, your obligations, and your duty—this is the faithfulness you should hold to"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). God's words instantly dispelled my concerns. In the future, if when I become older I am unable to comprehend things quickly, and can't do my text-based duties, I can still do other duties that suit my capabilities. Even if one day my physical condition prevents me from doing my duties, so long as my heart doesn't depart from God, and I can call out to Him, eat and drink His words, and reflect on myself, God won't reject me. What God despises is my lack of genuine faith in Him, as I always pursue blessings. Thinking of this, I felt a sense of liberation in my heart and no longer felt passive or negative. Instead, I began to think things through deeply and study, making some progress in learning the skills at hand. I thank God for His guidance from the bottom of my heart. No matter

what my physical condition is, or what kind of outcome or destination I face, I am willing to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements and do my duties well.

10. The Hidden Motivation Behind “Not Calling Out People’s Shortcomings”

By Jiayu, China

Sister Li Le was a preacher, and she also checked up on our church’s work. We normally got along very well, and whenever I had a bad state, she would fellowship and help me based on her experience. Recently, I discovered that she had no sense of burden toward her duty, and each week, she would only gather once with us deacons and get a rough understanding of the church’s work, but when it came to problems with the work, she rarely sought the truth to resolve them with us. Thinking that Li Le was in charge of the work of several churches, if she was always in such a state, then it would affect these churches’ work. I ought to mention it to her, or report her situation to the upper-level leaders so that they could promptly get a grasp on her state and fellowship with her and get her to reverse course. However, I never mentioned it. I had recently heard Li Le’s fellowship, saying she thought that she was a layman in the work of preaching the gospel, and that she didn’t understand much of the professional work, nor did she have a good grasp on the principles of gospel-preaching. She thought that doing this duty was somewhat strenuous for her. Actually, her caliber was not bad, and she was not totally unable to cooperate. It was only that she had no sense of burden when doing her duty. As long as she diligently grasped some of the principles, she would be able to do her duty well. But, if I reported her situation to the leaders at this time, and required that she check up on and supervise the church’s work, wouldn’t she think that my requirements for her were too harsh? And would she, because of this, fall into a despondent state and be unwilling to do her duty? Forget it, I thought. Grasping Li Le’s state was the work of the upper-

level leaders. Even if I didn't say anything, they ought to know about it. Thinking up to this point, I decided not to report Li Le's situation. Later on, when Li Le gathered with us, there were several times when I wanted to point out her problem in doing her duty, but I was scared that Li Le would say my requirements for her were too harsh. If she couldn't accept it, this would destroy our relationship, and she would treat me differently after this. Just like this, when the words were on the tip of my tongue those few times, I swallowed them.

Before long, I saw a passage of God's words: **"It's not so difficult to solve the problem of false leaders and antichrists; false leaders don't perform actual work and are easy to discover and see clearly; antichrists disturb and disrupt church work and are also easy to discover and see clearly. All this relates to the problem of disturbing God's chosen people performing their duties, and you should report and expose such people—only by doing that can you prevent church work from being delayed. Reporting and exposing false leaders and antichrists is crucial work that guarantees that God's chosen people can perform their duties well, and all of God's chosen people bear this responsibility. No matter who it is, as long as they are a false leader or an antichrist, then God's chosen people should expose them and bring them to light, and in this way you will fulfill your responsibility. ... You've been listening to sermons for years, and even now you still can't discern false leaders and antichrists, instead willing to mix with antichrists and eat all day long without giving serious thought to anything at all. Such behavior is enough to show that you are not true believers in God. Firstly, you do not love the truth or accept the truth; secondly, you have no sense of responsibility for your duty, much less can it be said that you perform it loyally, and you simply ignore church**

work. You appear to perform your duty but you achieve no results; you're just going through the formalities. No matter how false leaders and antichrists disturb and damage church work, you are totally unaware of it, and it doesn't bother you at all. ... God's house has watered you all this time and you've listened to many sermons, and what is the outcome? There is this serious problem, that of an antichrist appearing in the church, but you're unaware of it. This shows that you haven't progressed at all, that you are numb and dull-witted, and that you indulge your flesh. You're a pile of dead people, with not one living, not one who pursues the truth, at most just a few laborers. To have believed in God and listened to sermons all this time to then mingle with an antichrist, to not expose him or report him—what is the difference between you and someone who doesn't believe in God? You are with the antichrists, you are not God's people; you follow antichrists, you follow Satan, and are absolutely not followers of God. Even though you didn't do those evil things that the antichrist did, yet you followed him and protected him, because you didn't expose or report him and prattled on about not having associated much with the antichrist and that you didn't know what he was doing. By doing this, were you not shielding the antichrist with your eyes wide open? The antichrist did so much evil and paralyzed the church's work, disrupted church life into a total mess, and yet you say you didn't know what the antichrist was doing—who would believe that? You saw that the antichrist was disturbing and damaging church work with your very own eyes and yet were completely indifferent and didn't react at all. No one exposed or reported him—you all failed to perform even this one tiny responsibility and you are so without conscience and reason!" (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part

One)). Through God's words I realized that God has expressed all these truths to provide us. His fellowships on truths regarding discerning antichrists and false leaders are very meticulous and comprehensive. He hopes that when people disturb the work of God's house, we will be able to fulfill our responsibility and stand up to safeguard the church's work. If someone sees the work of God's house being affected and is not consciously aware of it, nor do they have a sense of justice and stand up to stop it or report it to the upper levels, then such a person is a dead person without a conscience and someone without a shred of witness. What God exposed was my exact state. When I saw that Li Le was rarely checking up on the church's work lately and that this had already affected the work, because I was apprehensive and scared of destroying our relationship, I didn't dare to point it out to her or report her to the upper levels. I did not safeguard the church's work in the slightest, and God really detested me. Thinking of this, I was reproached in my heart, and I opened my laptop, wanting to report Li Le's situation to the upper-level leaders. But I still had apprehensions, and I thought, "If I report Li Le's problem, then the upper-level leaders will certainly fellowship with her, and she will know that it was me who reported her to the leaders. What would she think of me then? Would she think that I had called out her shortcomings behind her back? If she bore a grudge against me, then how could we work together to do our duties in the future?" As soon as I thought of all this, I deleted the message. I thought to myself, "Everyone has a bad state at times, and everyone is lacking in certain areas. It's better not to seize hold of others' small problems and report them. After a while, perhaps Li Le will become aware of her issue and reverse course. It's better if I don't report it."

Several days later, Li Le and I went to a gathering to implement work, and I read that passage of God's words once more: **"God's house has**

watered you all this time and you've listened to many sermons, and what is the outcome? There is this serious problem, that of an antichrist appearing in the church, but you're unaware of it. This shows that you haven't progressed at all, that you are numb and dull-witted, and that you indulge your flesh. You're a pile of dead people, with not one living, not one who pursues the truth, at most just a few laborers" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part One)). Seeing the words "dead people," it was like my heart had been pierced with a needle. Thinking that I was always unable to practice the truth, I felt reproached inside. I said a silent prayer in my heart, "God, please guide me to be able to safeguard the church's interests and point out Li Le's problem to her." After I prayed, Li Le happened to fellowship about her manifestation of not doing actual work based on God's words. She said that especially when she saw that some church leaders were of quite good caliber and that she was not as good as them at handling the work, she would be scared that they would look down on her. She said that as a preacher, her working capabilities could not match those of the church leaders, so she didn't check up too much on the work of that church. Li Le had realized that her lack of supervision and follow-up on the work was a manifestation of a false leader. Wouldn't I be pouring salt on her wounds if I pointed out her problem after what she just said? Would she think that I was unloving and didn't consider her feelings? So, all I did was nothing but give her a short and simple reminder. Afterward, I thought that it would be better for me to report Li Le's situation to the leaders. This way, the leaders could promptly fellowship with her and help her. So, I reported the few situations that I had seen to the leaders. After the leaders fellowshiped with her and pointed out her problem, Li Le opened up during a gathering and said that she had eaten and drunk God's words of exposing false

leaders, and recognized that she hadn't checked up on or supervised the work and had not done her job well. Later on, Li Le checked up on the church's work somewhat more frequently, and she analyzed the reasons that the gospel work did not produce results with us, trying to resolve these problems in a real manner. When I saw that Li Le could do a bit of actual work, I was very happy.

Afterward, I was reflecting, and thought, "Why did I never dare to point out Li Le's problem or report it to the leaders? What exactly was controlling me on this?" While seeking, I read a passage of God's words: **"There is a tenet in philosophies for worldly dealings that says, 'Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship.' It means that in order to preserve a friendly relationship, one must keep silent about their friend's problems, even if they see them clearly—that they should abide by the principles of not striking people in the face or calling out their shortcomings. They are to deceive each other, hide from each other, engage in intrigue with each other; and though they know with crystal clarity what sort of person the other is, they do not say it outright, but employ cunning methods to preserve their friendly relationship. Why would one want to preserve such relationships? It is about not wanting to make enemies in this society, within one's group, which would mean subjecting oneself often to dangerous situations. Knowing someone will become your enemy and harm you after you have called out their shortcomings or hurt them, and not wishing to put yourself in such a situation, you employ the tenet of philosophies for worldly dealings that runs, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings.' In light of this, if two people are in such a relationship, do they count as true friends? (No.) They are not true**

friends, much less each other's confidant. So, what sort of relationship is this, exactly? Is it not a fundamental social relationship? (It is.) In such social relationships, people cannot offer their feelings, nor have deep exchanges, nor speak about whatever they wish. They cannot say out loud what is in their heart, or the problems they see in the other, or words that would benefit the other. Instead, they pick nice things to say, to keep the other's favor. They dare not speak the truth or uphold the principles, lest it give rise to animosity toward them in others. When no one is threatening to someone, does that person not live in relative ease and peace? Is this not people's goal in promoting the saying, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings'? (It is.) Clearly, this is a cunning, deceptive way of existence with an element of defensiveness, whose goal is self-preservation. People who live like this have no confidants, no close friends with whom they can say whatever they like. They are defensive with each other, and calculating, and strategic, each taking what they need from the relationship. Is this not so? At its root, the goal of 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings' is to keep from offending others and making enemies, to protect oneself by not causing hurt to anyone. It is a technique and method one adopts to keep themselves from being hurt"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). In the past, I was quite approving of the saying, "If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings." This was because this saying taught me that when interacting with others, one must take their feelings into account. One must not be too harsh to others or call out their shortcomings. I thought that people who could act in this way were good people, people with reason and morality. Seeing what

God exposed, I finally understood that the saying, “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings” was a philosophy for worldly dealings, and that those who lived by it would become extremely sly, deceitful, selfish, and despicable. On the surface, acting like this appeared to be considerate to others, but in reality, the motivation behind it was to not offend people. Even if one noticed someone else’s problems, they wouldn’t mention it, acting as a people pleaser and safeguarding their fleshly relationships. When interacting with people like this, even though one’s relationships with others might look very well-preserved on the surface, there was no sincerity between them. They were not helping each other, but rather being on guard around each other and using each other. I was living by the philosophy for worldly dealings known as, “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings.” When I saw that Li Le was rarely checking up on and supervising the church’s work as of late, at first, I wanted to point it out to her or report it to the leaders. However, I thought that one must not call out the shortcomings of others, and Li Le herself had said that doing the work was a bit strenuous for her, so if I mentioned that she was not checking up on or supervising the work, would I not be requiring too much from her? I made the excuse that every person has a bad state at times and has their own inadequacies, and chose to remain silent. When I heard Li Le open up and recognize that she hadn’t checked up on the work, I was afraid that pointing out her problem after what she said would be like exposing her scars, so I just said a few meaningless words. On the surface, I appeared to be considerate of Li Le, but my despicable motivation was hidden in the background. I was afraid she would say I’d required too much of her or that I was telling on her and calling out her shortcomings. If I offended her over this matter, she would

hold a grudge against me and give me attitude in the future, and we wouldn't work together peacefully and joyfully like we do now. To safeguard my relationship with her, I gave up on practicing the truth time and again. Superficially, it seemed like Li Le and I were on the best of terms and were good friends who kept no secrets from each other, but I was not at all sincere or loving toward her. I thought of how when I was in a bad state, Li Le would often fellowship with me and help me, and when she saw that I had a problem, she would point it out so that I could recognize it and reverse course, but in order not to make an enemy, I heartlessly watched as Li Le lived inside her corrupt disposition and didn't pay her any heed, all under the pretense of being considerate toward her. Li Le couldn't recognize her own problem and wasn't able to promptly reverse course on her state. She suffered losses to her life entry and the church's work was affected. I was truly so selfish and despicable! In no way was I being considerate toward her; this was clearly me seeing her about to fall into a pit and not pulling her back up. Was I not a people pleaser, an evil-hearted person? Reflecting on this, I finally had some discernment of the satanic philosophy known as "If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings." Satan used these philosophies for worldly dealings to corrupt man and make people be on guard against each other and use each other, becoming increasingly selfish, cold, and lacking in humanity. If I continued living by this moral code, I would only become more and more deceitful.

Later on, I saw another passage of God's words, and understood what it meant to call out people's shortcomings and what it meant to help people. God says: **"Is the phrase 'call out' in the saying 'if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings' good or bad? Does the phrase 'call out' have a level on which it refers to people's being revealed or**

exposed within the words of God? (It does not.) From My understanding of the phrase ‘call out’ as it exists in human language, it does not mean that. Its essence is one of a somewhat malicious form of exposure; it means to reveal people’s problems and deficiencies, or some things and behaviors unknown to others, or some intrigue, ideas, or views operating in the background. This is the meaning of the phrase ‘call out’ in the saying ‘if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings.’ If two people get along well and are confidants, with no barriers between them, and they each hope to be of benefit and assistance to the other, then it would be best for them to sit together and lay out each other’s problems in openness and sincerity. This is proper, and it is not calling out others’ shortcomings” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). God’s words reversed my incorrect view on things. The “call out their shortcomings” part of “if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings” is a malicious exposing of other people’s problems and deficiencies. The motivation of this is not to help people, instead, it carries some insidious intentions. It is for the sake of achieving one’s unmentionable goals, and acting like this would only mean attacking people and causing them pain. It is not at all edifying or advantageous for people. Meanwhile, the “exposing” that God speaks of is a positive thing. It means noticing someone’s problem and sincerely wanting to help them, and getting them to recognize the nature of the problem and be able to promptly reverse course. Exposing people like this is advantageous for them, and it is not calling out people’s shortcomings. When I noticed that Li Le’s problem was already affecting the work, pointing out the problem would have got her to recognize it and reverse course, and enabled her to do her duty well. Reporting this to the leaders was also to get the leaders to grasp Li Le’s situation and promptly help her

reverse course so that the church's work wouldn't be affected. This was practicing the truth and helping brothers and sisters. It was not calling out people's shortcomings, let alone telling on someone behind their back. It was a positive thing. If someone accepts the truth, when faced with others pointing out and exposing their problems, they are able to reflect, recognize, and promptly reverse course. This is beneficial to their own life entry and the church's work. It's just like Li Le, who, using the leaders' pointing out her problem and helping her, was able to reflect on and try to know herself and promptly reverse her attitude toward her duty. When encountering problems with gospel work, she discussed and sought solutions with us, and after fellowships, she had somewhat of a path to practice. I saw that pointing out and exposing someone's problem was not being harsh toward them, and that having harsh requirements for someone meant not considering their stature or caliber and not looking at whether they did their best to cooperate, but instead persistently making requirements of someone as soon as their deviations or insufficiencies became visible. Being so nitpicky and finding faults in others makes it easy to put restraints on people and even make them negative. Meanwhile, as a leader and worker, supervising and checking up on the church's work was Li Le's job. What's more, she had some caliber, and even though she was unfamiliar with the work of gospel-preaching, as long as she studied diligently, she could master some principles or be able to resolve some problems when partnered with brothers and sisters in a group. She was living in her corrupt disposition and didn't do actual work, so my pointing out and reporting her problem was normal supervision of leaders and workers, but instead, I mistakenly believed that I was being too harsh on her. This sort of view on things was truly so absurd!

One day, I read two passages of God's words, and gained some understanding about the root cause of why I didn't practice the truth. Almighty God says: **"Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; the truth has not become their life. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter evil people and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus disturbing the work of the church and harming God's chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? Neither; this is primarily the consequence of being constrained by corrupt dispositions. One of the corrupt dispositions you reveal is a deceitful disposition; when something happens to you, the first thing you think of is your own interests, the first thing you consider is the consequences, whether this will be beneficial to you. This is a deceitful disposition, is it not? Another is a selfish and base disposition. You think, 'What does a loss to the interests of God's house have to do with me? I'm not a leader, so why should I care? It's got nothing to do with me. It's not my responsibility.' Such thoughts and words are not something that you consciously think, but are produced by your subconscious—which is the corrupt disposition revealed when people encounter an issue"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"Once the truth has become life in you, when you observe someone who is blasphemous toward God, unfearful of God, and perfunctory while performing their duty, or who disrupts and disturbs church work, you will respond according to the truth principles, and**

will be able to identify and expose them as necessary. If the truth has not become your life, and you still live within your satanic disposition, then when you discover evil people and devils who cause disruptions and disturbances to the work of the church, you will turn a blind eye and a deaf ear; you will brush them aside, without reproach from your conscience. You will even think that anyone causing disturbances to the work of the church has nothing to do with you. No matter how much the work of the church and the interests of the house of God suffer, you don't care, intervene, or feel guilty—which makes you someone who has no conscience or reason, a disbeliever, a laborer. You eat what is of God's, drink what is of God's, and enjoy all that comes from God, yet feel that any harm to the interests of the house of God is not related to you—which makes you a traitor who bites the hand that feeds you. If you do not protect the interests of the house of God, are you even human? This is a demon that has insinuated itself into the church. You feign belief in God, pretend to be a chosen one, and you want to freeload in God's house. You are not living the life of a human being, are more like a fiend than a person, and are clearly one of the disbelievers” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

God's words exposed my true situation. I saw that I did not have the truth, that I lived by a deceitful and selfish satanic disposition. When matters befell me, I only considered my own interests and didn't safeguard the church's work at all. I saw clearly that Li Le had no sense of burden when doing her duty, that she rarely checked up on and supervised the work, and that this had already affected the normal progress of the church's work. If I was someone who had humanity and had a conscience, I would promptly point this out to Li Le and report it to the upper levels, but in order to safeguard my relationship with her, the few times that the words were on

the tip of my tongue, I used the excuse of “The leaders often meet with Li Le, so even if I don’t say anything, they’ll still grasp her state” as a reason to choose silence. When I wanted to tell the upper-level leaders about Li Le’s problem, I was afraid of offending her and came up with another high-sounding excuse, saying, “Everyone has a bad state at times, and one shouldn’t require too much of others.” I was fabricating things in order to not practice the truth. I was truly so deceitful, so crafty! I enjoyed the provision and shepherding of so many of God’s words; if I still had a bit of humanity and conscience, when I saw the church’s work suffering losses I ought to stand up and do whatever I could to safeguard it. If I had been able to promptly mention Li Le’s problem to her, she would have been able to recognize and reverse course a bit sooner, and the work would not have been held up for such a long time. These were all consequences of being selfish and despicable and not practicing the truth. Additionally, before I always believed that pointing out Li Le’s problem was a matter for the upper-level leaders to handle. This view of mine was also wrong. Safeguarding the church’s work is the responsibility of every one of God’s chosen people. As a member of God’s house, I am responsible for supervising the work of leaders and workers, and when I see leaders or workers do something that goes against the principles or is not of benefit to the church’s work, I should point it out and fulfill my responsibility. Recognizing this much, I did not want to live by my corrupt disposition any longer, and I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to find a path to practice.

I read God’s words that said: **“If it is an action that aligns with principles, then even if your doing it offends people or causes you to be castigated behind your back, that is of little consequence; if it is an action that does not align with principles, however, then even if by**

doing it you gain approval and support from everyone, and get along with everyone—but the one thing is that you cannot account for it before God—you have suffered a loss. If you maintain relationships with the majority, making them happy and satisfied and earning their praise, but you offend God, the Creator, then you are a supreme fool. Therefore, whatever you do, you must clearly understand whether it aligns with principles, whether it pleases God, what God’s attitude toward it is, what stance people should take, what principles people should uphold, how God has instructed, and how you should do it—you should first be clear about this” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (24)). **“If you have the motivations and perspective of a people pleaser, then, in all matters, you will be incapable of practicing the truth and abiding by principle, and you will always fail and fall down. If you do not awaken and do not ever seek the truth, then you are a disbeliever, and you will never gain the truth and life. What, then, should you do? When faced with such things, you must pray to God and call out to Him, begging for salvation and asking that He give you more faith and strength and enable you to abide by the principles, do what you should do, handle things according to the principles, stand firm in the position you should stand in, protect the interests of God’s house, and prevent any harm from coming to the work of God’s house. If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God’s words gave me a path to practice. In the matters that befell me, I had to seek how to act in accordance with the principles. I couldn’t not practice the truth or not

expose someone's problems because I feared offending them. If I did this, even though my relationship with them would be well-preserved, violating the truth principles and causing losses to the interests of God's house was something that offended God. God loves pure and honest people who, when seeing that the interests of God's house suffer losses, are able to safeguard the church's work without considering their own interests. Recognizing this much, I secretly resolved that when I noticed something that damaged the church's interests in the future, I could no longer be a coward in order to protect myself. Even if the other person didn't accept what I pointed out, gave me attitude, or developed a bias against me because of it, I should not be constrained by this. My motivation was to help others and to safeguard the church's interests. This was a positive thing, and I should not be constrained by my corrupt disposition. If we always consider our own interests, we can't overcome our corrupt disposition; so, we should pray to and rely on God, asking Him to give us more faith and strength to be able to let go of our personal interests, be honest people, and fulfill our responsibility. Only in this way can we have a hope at salvation.

Later on, I consciously practiced being an honest person. There was a period of time when Shen Qing, a sister I was partnered with, rarely checked up on the watering work. There was a waterer who, for personal reasons, had not gone to water newcomers for two weeks, and Shen Qing didn't know about it. I thought that Shen Qing was supervising watering work, and that she should have a grasp on the current working situations of waterers and promptly resolve problems with the watering work. I had to tell Shen Qing about her problems to get her to recognize them and reverse course as fast as possible, so that the watering of newcomers won't be held up. But then I thought that if I pointed out these problems one by one, would Shen Qing be unable to accept it? She did usually do some work, so

maybe it was only during this period of time that her check-ups were not timely, and afterward she would reverse course. I realized that once again, I had wanted to safeguard my relationships with others. I thought of God's words that I had read in the past: **"If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God loves honest people. Now that I had noticed Shen Qing's problem, I ought to mention it to her. This was safeguarding the church's work and was not malicious at all. Even if she didn't accept it and gave me attitude, I wouldn't regret fulfilling my responsibility. I prayed to God and asked Him to give me more strength to practice the truth. After praying, I pointed out all the problems that I had noticed to Shen Qing, and at first, she didn't accept it, reasoning with me and defending herself, so I pointed out her manifestations of not doing actual work based on God's words and fellowshiped with her about the path of checking up on work. The next day, Shen Qing opened up and said that through my pointing out her problem, she finally realized that she had been perfunctory in the performance of her duty and was willing to reverse course. Afterward, Shen Qing was rather active when doing her duty, and she began to check up on the work of the waterers in detail. Seeing that Shen Qing was able to reverse course, I was very happy. I had finally put the truth into practice. Going forward, I am willing to rely on God and practice to become a true good person.

11. My Daughter's Arrest Revealed Me

By Lin Zhi, China

In the early evening of October 14, 2023, a sister informed me that a leader from Xinguang Church had been arrested by the police. I was shocked when I heard this and thought, “Oh no! Could it be my daughter?” I hurriedly opened the letter I had been given, only to read, “Min Jing has been arrested ...” All the strength suddenly drained from my body and I thought, “My daughter has been arrested! Those police are so evil and despicable. There is nothing they won’t do in their savage persecution of believers. How could she endure this? My daughter is my own flesh and blood. How can I bear to let her suffer such torment?” It felt as if a knife were being twisted into my heart and I desperately wished that I could undergo that suffering in my daughter’s place. I felt especially worried because if the police knew my daughter was a leader, they would certainly pressure her to reveal details about the church. I worried that if she didn’t divulge those details, the police might cripple her with their beatings. If she were crippled at such a young age, how would she go on living going forward? If she were beaten to death, I would lose my daughter forever. My daughter had only been attending gatherings for two years and there was still much truth she still didn’t understand. How could God allow the police to arrest her? What’s more, my daughter had abandoned her career and her marriage to put all of her time into expending herself for God. Why hadn’t God protected her? Doesn’t God love man? I began to complain against God, and the more I thought about the whole matter, the more upset I became. I couldn’t keep the tears from streaming from my eyes. I wanted to read God’s words to rectify my state, but I just couldn’t get into it. I thought of two sisters I had partnered with before who, after being arrested, were

pressured to sell out leaders and workers, were forcibly brainwashed and eventually betrayed God and became Judases. I was sure that the police would also pressure my daughter to sell out the church, and if they brainwashed her as well, and she ended up being misled and acting as a Judas, she would completely lose her chance at salvation! Thinking of this, I couldn't help but complain in my heart, thinking, "Why didn't God protect my daughter? Why did He allow this kind of situation to befall her?" I also blamed my daughter's host sister for not being careful enough and for failing to realize how dangerous the situation had become and for not transferring my daughter to a different host home in time. After that, I was in a terrible state for several days—I couldn't eat, sleep, or focus on my duty, and I didn't even take heed when the sister I was partnered with fellowshiped God's words with me. I couldn't keep my imagination from running wild. I knew that if I carried on like this, I would delay my duty and my life would suffer, so I came before God in prayer, "Oh God! Ever since my daughter was arrested, I've become very negative and weak and have even complained against and misunderstood You. I don't know what lesson I should learn from this situation. Please guide me to understand Your intention."

After that, the sister I was partnered with read me this passage of God's words: **"People must frequently examine anything in their heart that is incompatible with God, or is a misunderstanding of Him. How do misunderstandings come about? Why do people misunderstand God? (Because their self-interest is affected.) After people see the facts about the Jewish exile from Judea, they feel hurt, and say, 'At first, God loved the Israelites so much. He led them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, gave them manna from the heavens and spring water to drink, then personally gave them laws to lead them, and**

taught them how to live. God's love for man was overflowing—people who lived back then were so blessed! How could God's attitude do a one-eighty in the blink of an eye? Where did all His love go?' People's feelings cannot get past this, and they begin to doubt, saying, 'Is God love or isn't He? Why isn't His original attitude toward the Israelites visible anymore? His love has disappeared without a trace. Does He have any love at all?' This is where people's misunderstanding starts. What is the context in which people form misunderstandings? Could it be because God's actions are not compatible with people's notions and imaginings? Is this fact what causes people to misunderstand God? Is the reason people misunderstand God not because they limit their definition of His love? They think, 'God is love. Therefore, He should look out for and protect people, and shower them with grace and blessings. This is what God's love is! I like it when God loves people this way. I could especially see how much God loved people when He led them through the Red Sea. People back then were so blessed! I wish I could be one of them.' When you are enamored with this story, you treat the love God revealed in that instant as the highest truth, and the single marker of His essence. You limit your definition of Him in your heart, and treat everything God did at that moment as the highest truth. You think that this is God's most lovely side, and the one that most compels people to respect and fear Him, and that this is God's love. In actuality, God's actions themselves were positive, but because of your limited definitions, they became notions in your mind, and a basis on which you define God. They make you misunderstand God's love, as though there is nothing else to it than mercy, caring, protection, guidance, grace, and blessings—as though that is all God's love is. Why do you cherish these aspects of love so much? Is it because it is tied to

your own self-interest? (Yes, it is.) Which self-interests is it tied to? (The pleasures of the flesh and a comfortable life.) When people believe in God they want to obtain these things from Him, but not other things. People do not want to think about judgment, chastisement, trials, refinement, suffering for God, giving things up and expending themselves, or even sacrificing their own lives. People just want to enjoy God's love, care, protection, and guidance, so they define God's love as the only characteristic of His essence, and His only essence. Did the things God did when leading the Israelites across the Red Sea not become the source of people's notions? (Yes, they did.) This formed a context in which people formed notions about God. If they formed notions about God, then can they achieve a true understanding of God's work and disposition? It is obvious that not only will they not understand, but they will misinterpret it and form notions about it. This proves that man's understanding is too narrow, and is not true understanding. For it is not the truth, but rather a type of love and understanding which people analyze and interpret from God based on their own notions, imaginings, and selfish desires; it is not compatible with God's true essence. In what other ways does God love people other than through mercy, salvation, care, protection, and by listening to their prayers? (With chastening, discipline, pruning, judgment, chastisement, trials, and refinement.) That is correct. God shows His love in an abundance of ways: by striking, disciplining, reproaching, and with judgment, chastisement, trials, refinement, and so on. These are all aspects of God's love. Only this perspective is comprehensive and in line with the truth. If you understand this, when you examine yourself and realize you have misunderstandings about God, are you not then able to recognize your distortions, and to do a good job reflecting on where you

went wrong? Can this not help you resolve your misunderstandings about God? (Yes, it can.) In order to accomplish this, you must seek the truth. So long as people seek the truth, they can eliminate their misunderstandings about God, and once they have eliminated their misunderstandings about God, they can submit to all of God's arrangements" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by

Understanding the Truth Can One Know God's Deeds). Through reading God's words, I realized that I was living in a state of misunderstanding of God because I had delimited God's love. In my notions and imaginings, I believed that God's love consisted of mercy, lovingkindness, protection and blessings. Persecution, hardship, trials and refinements didn't fit my notion and I believed that they were not God's love, so after my daughter was arrested, I complained against and misunderstood God and was unable to submit to the situation He had orchestrated. I reflected on how, in the past, I had been forced to leave home because I was being hunted by the police. At the time, my daughter was still quite young and she was able to grow up in good health under God's care and protection. I thought that this was what God's love consisted of. After believing in God, my daughter began doing her duty in the church. I thought that since our whole family was expending ourselves for God, we would certainly have good outcomes and destinations, so I thought even more that this was God's love and thanked God in my heart. Now, my daughter had been arrested and it was highly likely that she would be tortured. If she couldn't withstand this persecution and became a Judas, she would lose her chance at salvation. This made me question God's love, blame God for not protecting my daughter, and develop a misunderstanding of Him in my heart. My perception of God's love was completely predicated on what was favorable to me. If God ensured that everything went smoothly and peacefully for my family and

outcomes were favorable for my family, I would say that God is love. But when situations didn't accord with my notions and were not favorable to my family, I would deny God's love. I thought that God's love consisted of mercy, lovingkindness, protection and blessings, but this was my notion and imagining and didn't accord with truth. God's love doesn't just consist of mercy and lovingkindness, it also consists of judgment, chastisement, trials and refinements. My daughter's arrest might have seemed like a bad thing, but if she was able to seek the truth and stand firm in her testimony, her faith and will to undergo suffering would be perfected. This would actually be a good thing for my daughter. What's more, my daughter's arrest helped reveal my notions, imaginings and unreasonable demands of God, allowing me to reflect on my corruption and impurities. I also understood that one shouldn't seek grace and blessings in one's faith and should focus on what is most important: experiencing God's work and words, attaining the truth, casting off corruption and achieving dispositional transformation. I saw that no matter what God does, it is always a manifestation of His salvation and love.

Afterward, I continued to seek with regard to my issue. When my daughter was arrested, I constantly made demands of and complained against God in my heart—what was the nature of my problem? In the midst of my seeking, I came across this passage of God's words: **“Some ignorant parents cannot comprehend life or destiny, do not recognize God's sovereignty, and tend to do ignorant things when it comes to their children. For example, after their children become independent, they may encounter certain special situations, hardships, or major incidents; some face illnesses, some get involved in lawsuits, some get divorced, some are deceived and scammed, and some are kidnapped, harmed, severely beaten, or face death. There are even some who fall**

into drug abuse, and so on. What should parents do in these special and significant situations? What is the typical reaction of most parents? Do they do what they ought to do as created beings with the identity of parents? Very seldom do parents hear such news and react as they would if it had happened to a stranger. A majority of parents stay up all night till their hair turns gray, they lose sleep night after night, have no appetite during the day, rack their brains with thinking, and some even weep bitterly, till their eyes turn red and their tears run dry. They pray fervently to God, for God to take their own faith into account and protect their children, show them favor and bless them, show mercy, and spare their lives. As parents in such a situation, their human weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and feelings toward their children are all exposed. What else is revealed? Their rebelliousness against God. They implore God and pray to Him, beseeching Him to keep their children from calamity. Even if a disaster occurs, they pray that their children won't die, that they can escape danger, they won't be harmed by evil people, their illnesses won't grow more severe but will improve, and so on. What are they really praying for? (God, with these prayers they are making demands of God, with an undertone of complaint.) In one respect, they are extremely dissatisfied with their children's plight, complaining that God shouldn't have allowed such things to happen to their children. Their dissatisfaction is mixed with complaint, and they ask God to change His mind, not to act like this, to deliver their children from danger, to keep them safe, to heal their sickness, to help them escape lawsuits, to avert calamity when it arises, and so on—in short, to make everything go smoothly. By praying like this, in one respect, they are complaining to God, and in another, they are making demands of Him. Isn't this a manifestation of rebelliousness? (It is.) Implicitly, they

are saying that what God is doing is not right or good, that He shouldn't act like this. Because these are their children, and they are believers, they think God shouldn't let such things happen to their children. Their children are different from others; they should receive preferential blessings from God. On account of their faith in God, He ought to bless their children, and if He does not, they become distressed, they cry, throw a tantrum, and no longer want to follow God. If their child dies, they feel that they can't go on living either. Is that the sentiment they have in mind? (Yes.) Isn't this a form of protest against God? (It is.) This is protesting against God" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (19)).

God exposes how parents make unreasonable requests of Him when their children meet with misfortunes, believing God should act in this or that way and blaming Him if He does not act accordingly. This is protesting against God. I was in just such a state. As soon as I heard that my daughter had been arrested, I became worried and frightened that the police would torture and torment her, and I was even more worried that she would sell out her brothers and sisters, become a Judas and not have a good outcome. Without even realizing it, I began to complain against God, thinking, "After all, my daughter abandoned her career to expend herself for God full time. How could God not protect her?" I was always either misunderstanding God or making unreasonable demands of Him. How lacking in reason I was! I thought about how God holds sovereignty over and arranges every situation that we encounter every day. Yet, I didn't understand God's sovereignty and became unreasonable and antagonistic toward God when my daughter was arrested. Then, when the sister I was partnered with tried to fellowship God's words with me, I wouldn't even listen to her and didn't accept God's words. If I didn't resolve this state of mine and something awful happened to my

daughter, I would surely complain and might even turn against God and betray Him! I thought of how when Job underwent trials and lost all of his property and children and his body broke out in boils, he recognized that God had given him his property and children, and that it was with God's permission that they were taken away. As such, he didn't complain or argue with God, and he was able to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements and even praised God's name. As for me, when faced with my daughter's arrest, I began to doubt God's almightiness, sovereignty and authority, continually worrying and feeling afraid and even making demands of and arguing with God. I was rebelling against and resisting God! Realizing this, I no longer wanted to rebel against or resist God anymore. No matter what happened to my daughter, whether or not she was tortured or would have a good destination and outcome, I would not complain against God and would submit in all things to His sovereignty and arrangements.

Later on, I came across these passages of God's words: **"In God's eyes, the lives of children and parents are independent. They do not belong to each other, nor do they have a hierarchical relationship. Of course, they certainly do not have a relationship of owning or being owned. Their lives come from God, and God is sovereign over their destinies. It's simply that children are born from their parents, parents are older than their children, and children younger than their parents; yet, based on this relationship, this superficial phenomenon, people believe that children are the accessories and private property of their parents. This isn't looking at the matter from its roots, but only considering it based on the surface-level, the flesh, and one's affections. Therefore, this manner of consideration is itself wrong, and this perspective is wrong. Isn't that so? (Yes.)"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (19)). **"Besides birth and childrearing, the**

parents' responsibility in their children's lives is simply to provide them with a formal environment to grow up in, for nothing except the predestination of the Creator has a bearing on a person's fate. No one can control what kind of future a person will have; it is predetermined long in advance, and not even one's parents can change one's fate. As far as fate is concerned, everyone is independent, and everyone has their own fate. So, no one's parents can stave off one's fate in life or exert the slightest influence on the role one plays in life. It could be said that the family into which one is destined to be born and the environment in which one grows up are nothing more than the preconditions for fulfilling one's mission in life. They do not in any way determine a person's fate in life or the kind of destiny within which a person fulfills their mission. And so, no one's parents can assist one in accomplishing one's mission in life, and likewise, no one's relatives can help one assume one's role in life. How one accomplishes one's mission and in what kind of living environment one performs one's role are entirely determined by one's fate in life" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Through God's words, I realized that it was mistaken to think of my daughter as my own "personal property" because she was my flesh and blood. Man's life derives from God—it is God that gives man his vital breath. A parent's role is just to give birth to children and raise them to adulthood. Once this is completed, our mission is done. Each person is independent; parents and children have their own fates and each of us must live according to the trajectory ordained by the Creator, carrying out our responsibilities. I also realized that the reason I worried about my daughter's flesh undergoing suffering and, as her mother, wanted to suffer in her stead, was due to a lack of understanding of God's sovereignty. In reality, what experiences we will have, what suffering we will undergo and

what role we must play in life are pre-ordained, so my concern was unnecessary. No matter how much I worried, it wouldn't change anything and wouldn't have any bearing on my daughter's future and fate. If, after being arrested, my daughter cravenly did whatever necessary to cling to life, selling out her brothers and sisters to protect her own interests, became a Judas and was expelled, then it was determined by her nature essence and the path she walked. No one could change that. After realizing this, I instantly felt a bit clearer. I knew that I had to give my daughter over to God, submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, put my heart into my work and do my duty well. Later, after eating and drinking some of God's words, I came to realize that what God is doing in the last days is the work of perfecting, and revealing and eliminating people. God uses the great red dragon to purify the church. For those that pursue the truth, no matter what sinister plot the CCP hatches or what rumors and fallacies it fabricates, they will not be misled, will not deny or betray God and will be able to stand firm in their testimony to God. As for those that do not pursue the truth and those who are not of God, they will be revealed and eliminated through these environments. God uses these adverse circumstances to test people: Those who stand firm in their testimony are wheat, while those who cannot stand firm are the abandoned chaff. This is one of the methods in God's process of testing people and is the wisdom of God's work. Whether or not my daughter could pass this test and was able to bear testimony depended upon how she pursued the truth in normal times and also depended on her nature essence and the path she had chosen. If she was able to stand firm in her testimony to God, that would show that she had true faith in God. If, during this trial, she denied and betrayed God, this would be God's way of revealing her. God is righteous to all people. Having realized this, I felt liberated and calm.

It's been two months since my daughter was arrested and I still haven't heard any news regarding her situation, but I know that her fate is in God's hands and I am not constrained by her situation. What's more, I have realized that I need to cherish the opportunity I still have to do my duty and perform my responsibilities well. Once I put aside my worry and concern for my daughter, I am able to put my heart into my duty.

12. Reflections After Losing My Duty

By Arabella, South Korea

Some time ago, the leaders arranged for me to train at reciting God's words. I was very happy to hear this news, feeling that this opportunity was quite hard to come by. However, when I thought back to when I had trained in recitation a few years previously, as regards the aspects of expressing tone, as well as my speed, phrasing, and emphasis, I'd had problems to varying degrees. At that time, I had felt that these problems were difficult to solve, and I lived in the difficulty, always defining myself as incapable, and thinking I was not cut out for recitation. Moreover, every day that I had practiced, my shortcomings had been exposed, and brothers and sisters had pointed out my problems. So I had felt that doing this duty made me seem too incompetent, and I had become even more negative and passive in my heart. I had no intention of making efforts to solve these problems but only practiced perfunctorily. As a result, after practicing for over half a year, I had made no significant improvement, and eventually, I was reassigned to another duty. When I thought about facing these problems again, I felt overwhelmed. Not only would my flesh have to suffer, but it was also uncertain whether I could eventually improve. Thinking about this made me troubled. A sister fellowshipped with me, "It's precisely because we have inadequacies and deficiencies that we need to step up our training. This work urgently needs people to cooperate. Your Mandarin is pretty good, and your voice also has a pleasant timbre to it. You must cherish such conditions and opportunities!" After listening to the sister's fellowship, I was somewhat touched in my heart, thinking, "Yes, I have a good voice—this is God's grace. Now it is time for me to do my part. I cannot live in the

difficulty; I need to strive upward and endeavor to improve as soon as possible, so that I can fulfill this duty!”

From then onward, I actively threw myself into practicing. Sister Zoe, the supervisor, listened to a piece of recitation that I had recorded and gave me guidance and help on it. She said, “The phrasing and emphasis in some parts of your reading are not quite appropriate. Have you been practicing for too short a time? Additionally, your breathing is also unstable, and your voice sounds insubstantial. You need to practice breathing more.” She also pointed out some detailed issues. After listening to her words, I felt a bit upset, thinking, “There are so many problems with my recitation; it’s really abysmal. And breathing isn’t something that can be improved quickly. It requires a long process of practice and accumulation!” Thinking about these detailed technical issues that she had mentioned, I felt devoid of any merit, and my face became all hot. I thought, “If I’m this bad, why should I even read? How long will I have to practice to fix so many problems? Other sisters read quite well. No matter how much I practice, I can’t match them. Even if I just about manage to do this duty in the future, I will be living in others’ shadows, and I will always be the ‘inferior student,’ without being able to make my presence felt at all.” Thinking about these things, I lost the desire to do this duty. Coincidentally, I had other work to do in the following days, so I didn’t practice, and whenever I had some time, I just rested for a while.

A few days later, the leader asked me if I had been practicing recitation. I said assertively, “I’ve been quite busy with my duty these past few days and haven’t had time to practice.” The leader asked me, “Then, have you been thinking about practicing? This duty is urgent. If you don’t find a way to make more time for practice, when will you be able to shoulder this duty?” I was a bit speechless and also felt a stab of pain in my

heart. Thinking about it, although I had been a bit busy with my duty these past few days, it wasn't that I couldn't find any time at all. The main issue was that I felt the problems with my recitation were too difficult to resolve. Even if I endured hardship and paid a price, I might not necessarily achieve good results, and I would still need to be corrected by others. I was unwilling to face this, so I avoided it whenever I could. The leader's question pierced right through me, and I felt somewhat upset, realizing that I had been too flippant and irresponsible in my approach to this duty. So, I inwardly reminded myself to change my attitude toward doing this duty. Hence, I quickly arranged time to practice.

After a few days, I felt that my recitation had improved somewhat, so I made an audio recording and submitted it to Zoe. I thought that she would say I had made some progress, but to my surprise, she again pointed out quite a few issues: unstable breathing, disjointed sentences, and so on. She patiently analyzed the issues for me, had me practice on the spot, and corrected me. When I couldn't correct the problems after multiple attempts, I became impatient and even felt a bit aggrieved, thinking, "I've been practicing for several days and still have so many problems. Maybe I naturally don't have the comprehension and caliber for it. I'm not able to do this duty. I shouldn't embarrass myself any further on this; I'd better take on another duty!" I started having thoughts of escaping and no longer wanted to continue practicing recitation, but I didn't dare mention it, fearing that others would say I was rejecting my duty. So, I became negative and slacked off, and didn't put much effort into practicing, thinking that if I made no improvements over time, the leader might not let me continue practicing.

One evening, I suddenly saw a message from the leader, saying, "You don't need to practice recitation anymore." Upon seeing this message, I felt

a sudden emptiness in my heart, along with an indescribable discomfort. Losing this duty didn't bring the relief or satisfaction I had imagined it would; instead, I felt deeply reproached and heavy-hearted. At that moment, I thought of two passages of God's words and quickly looked them up and read them. God says: **"This is because the thing that most perceptibly reflects the bond that links you to God is how you treat the matters God entrusts to you and the duty He assigns you, and the attitude you have. What is most observable and most practical is this issue. God is waiting; He wants to see your attitude. At this crucial juncture, you should hurry and make your position known to God, accept His commission, and perform your duty well. When you have grasped this crucial point and fulfilled the commission God has given to you, your relationship with God will be normal. If, when God entrusts a task to you, or tells you to perform a certain duty, your attitude is cursory and apathetic, and you do not take it seriously, is this not precisely the opposite of giving all your heart and strength? Can you perform your duty well in this way? Certainly not. You will not perform your duty adequately. So, your attitude when performing your duty is of crucial importance, as are the method and path you choose. No matter how many years they have believed in God, those who fail to perform their duties well will be eliminated"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"There are some people who are unwilling to suffer at all in their duties, who always complain whenever they encounter a problem and refuse to pay a price. What kind of attitude is that? It is a perfunctory one. If you perform your duty perfunctorily, and approach it with an irreverent attitude, what will the result be? You will perform your duty poorly, though you are capable of performing it well—your performance will not be up to standard, and God will be very**

dissatisfied with the attitude you have toward your duty. If you could have prayed to God, sought the truth, and put your whole heart and mind into it, if you could have cooperated in this way, then God would have prepared everything for you in advance, so that when you were handling matters, everything would fall into place, and get good results. You would not need to exert a vast amount of energy; when you did your utmost to cooperate, God would have already arranged everything for you. If you are slippery and slack off, if you do not attend properly to your duty, and always go down the wrong path, then God will not act upon you; you will lose this opportunity, and God will say, ‘You are no good; I cannot use you. Go stand off to the side. You like being wily and slacking off, don’t you? You like being lazy, and taking it easy, do you not? Well then, take it easy forevermore!’ God will give this grace and opportunity to someone else. What do you say: **Is this a loss or a gain? (A loss.) It is an enormous loss!**” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading God’s words, I felt God’s righteous disposition come upon me, especially when I read these words of God: **“You are no good; I cannot use you. Go stand off to the side. You like being wily and slacking off, don’t you? You like being lazy, and taking it easy, do you not? Well then, take it easy forevermore!”** I felt that my words, actions, and thoughts were all under God’s scrutiny. Although I hadn’t explicitly expressed my reluctance to do the duty of recitation, my attitude toward it had been particularly flippant, not striving to improve, and I had passively waited for the leader to tell me to stop doing it. God requires people to do their duty with all their heart and strength, but He never forces anyone. Since I myself had chosen to avoid my duty, God had treated me according to my choice. As a result, I had lost this duty, and the church had arranged for someone else to train at it,

meaning that God gave this opportunity of doing a duty to someone else. It could be argued that I had achieved my wish of being relieved of this duty, but why did I feel unrelieved in my heart? Only then did I realize that by choosing to escape this matter, I had become Satan's laughingstock, and had fallen into darkness. I thought, "Is this duty really that difficult? Are these problems truly unsolvable?" God says that when people give all their heart and strength, He will open a way to guide them, and help them resolve difficulties. God doesn't make things difficult for people or give them burdens they cannot bear. As long as one has the basic caliber and conditions to do a duty and strives upward according to God's requirements, the problems can be resolved. The brothers and sisters had repeatedly fellowshiped the importance of this duty, urging me to put effort into it. However, as soon as I had encountered a problem, I would get mired in the difficulty of it, unwilling to put effort into resolving it, and had even become negative and slacked off, waiting for the leader to relieve me of the duty. I had been so rebellious! Thinking about this, I felt deep regret and remorse.

During a devotional, I read these words of God: **"If, when some special difficulties befall you or you encounter some particular environments, your attitude is always to avoid them or to flee from them, to desperately try to reject them and get rid of them—if you do not want to put yourself at the mercy of God's orchestrations, are unwilling to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements, and do not want to let the truth take charge of you—if you always want to call the shots and to control everything about yourself according to your satanic disposition, then the consequences will be that, sooner or later, God will certainly set you aside or deliver you to Satan. If people understand this matter, they must quickly turn back and follow their**

road in life according to the correct path that God requires. This path is the right one, and when the path is right, that means that the direction is right. There may be bumps on the road and difficulties during this period, they may stumble or sometimes get a bit disgruntled and become negative for several days. As long as they can persist in performing their duties and not delay things, these problems will all be insignificant, but they must promptly reflect on themselves, seek the truth to resolve these issues, and they absolutely must not procrastinate, throw in the towel, or give up on their duties. This is crucial. ... When a duty befalls you, and it is entrusted to you, do not think of how to avoid facing difficulties; if something's difficult to handle, don't put it to one side and ignore it. You must face it head-on. You must remember at all times that God is with people, and they need only pray and seek from Him if they have any difficulties, and that with God, nothing is hard. You must have this faith. Since you believe that God is the Sovereign of all things, why do you still feel afraid when something befalls you, and that you have nothing to rely on? This proves that you do not rely on God. If you do not take Him as your support and as your God, then He is not your God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). When I faced difficulties, I didn't come before God to seek His intention, but always lived in my own notions and imaginings to delimit myself. Especially when the problems with recitation became numerous and difficult, and I didn't see good results after working hard for two days, I determined that these problems could not be solved at all, and further effort would be useless. So, even though I practiced, I did it carelessly only to get by, not cooperating sincerely. I thought of Sister Zoe. She started practicing even later than I did and also had quite a few problems, and I even thought she was not as good as I was

in some respects. I didn't think highly of her, but the sister was very serious about her duty, actively faced her inadequacies, and put in the effort to practice. Through continuous practice, she improved quickly, and her recitation results were quite good. Thinking of this, I realized that if I rely on God and put in the effort to practice diligently in the face of difficulties, the problems can be resolved. To the extent to which people cooperate, God will fulfill it. Looking back on these years, I had truly wasted my time. I followed God but did not trust in Him, and in the face of things, I didn't rely on God or seek His intention, but held on to my own views. As a result, others made progress while I remained stagnant. I was truly foolish!

Later, I continued to reflect. In the past, I faced many difficulties in both my studies and daily life, but I never easily concluded that I was incapable, nor did I give up before even trying. Just like when I once dreamed of becoming a lawyer, achieving both fame and fortune, at that time the pass rate for the national judicial examination was only about 7%, and my academic performance wasn't that good, but I didn't back down just because it was difficult. To achieve my dream, I isolated myself for over two months, and studied intensely every day without finding it painful. The thought of gaining fame and fortune and receiving admiration from others motivated me greatly. In the end, I really passed the exam. Thinking again about why I felt unable to solve problems with the recitation duty and always wanted to escape and retreat, it was because I was too selfish. I would do things that were beneficial to myself and avoid things that were not. During a devotional, I read a passage of God's words and gained some insight into my problem. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists have no conscience, reason, or humanity. Not only are they heedless of shame, but they have another hallmark, too: They are uncommonly selfish and vile. The literal sense of their 'selfishness and vileness' is not hard to**

grasp: They are blind to anything but their own interests. Anything concerning their own interests gets their full attention, and they will suffer for it, pay a price, engross themselves in it, and devote themselves to it. Anything not related to their own interests they will turn a blind eye to and take no notice of; others can do as they please—antichrists don't care if anyone is being disruptive or disturbing, and to them, this has nothing to do with them. Put tactfully, they mind their own business. But it is more accurate to say that this kind of person is vile, base, and sordid; we define them as 'selfish and vile.' How does the selfishness and vileness of the antichrists manifest itself? ... no matter what duty antichrists are doing, all they think about is whether it will allow them to step into the limelight; as long as it will boost their reputation, they rack their brains to come up with a way to learn how to do it, to carry it out; all they care about is whether it will set them apart. No matter what they do or think, they are only concerned with their own fame, gain, and status. No matter what duty they are doing, they only compete over who is higher or lower, who wins and who loses, who has the bigger reputation. They only care about how many people worship and look up to them, how many people obey them, and how many followers they have. They never fellowship the truth or solve real problems. They never consider how to do things according to principle when doing their duty, nor do they reflect on whether they have been loyal, have fulfilled their responsibilities, whether there have been deviations or oversights in their work, or if any problems exist, much less do they give thought to what God asks, and what God's intentions are. They pay not the slightest attention to all these things. They only put their head down and do things for the sake of fame, gain, and status, to satisfy their own ambitions and desires. This is the

manifestation of selfishness and vileness, is it not? This fully exposes how their hearts brim with their own ambitions, desires, and senseless demands; everything they do is governed by their ambitions and desires. No matter what they do, the motivation and source is their own ambitions, desires, and senseless demands. This is the archetypal manifestation of selfishness and vileness” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part One)).

After reading God’s words, I realized that my intentions and starting point in doing things were completely wrong, the same as that of antichrists. Whatever I did was driven by self-interest, and for things that could satisfy my desire for fame and fortune, and gain admiration from others, I would rack my brains and go to great lengths to achieve them, not fearing the suffering. On the contrary, for things that were not beneficial to me, even if they were meaningful and valuable, I was unwilling to do them, let alone put in effort or suffer and pay the price to achieve them. When I took the judicial examination, I had the determination of a “fighting spirit,” because passing the exam would allow me to become a lawyer, gain admiration from others, and earn a lot of money, achieving both fame and fortune. This motivation drove me to endure even the greatest hardships and strive for success. However, my attitude toward the recitation duty was completely different. I felt that doing this duty only involved being revealed, that it wouldn’t bring me fame or recognition and offered no opportunity to showcase my value. So, I was unwilling to suffer or pay the price for this duty, and was even reluctant to do it. Brothers and sisters repeatedly fellowshiped God’s urgent intention, in which God hopes that more people can hear His words and receive His salvation. They urged me to practice quickly so that I could shoulder this duty, but I only considered my own reputation and status. I didn’t listen to the brothers’ and sisters’ advice at

all, ignored God's intention, and turned a blind eye no matter how urgent and important the work was. I was too selfish and despicable! The more I thought about it, the more distressed I became. I came before God and prayed, "God, I have followed You for many years but have not been sincere. In everything I do, I consider my own interests and plan for my flesh, leaving many regrets in my duty. I don't want to live like this anymore; I want to change. May You scrutinize me!" After praying, I began to reflect on how I had been careless and perfunctory in my current duty, and how I could change this attitude toward doing my duty. After half a day passed, I suddenly received a message. The leader said I would be given another chance to continue practicing recitation. The moment when I read the message, I could hardly believe my eyes. I clearly realized that this was God's mercy, giving me a chance to repent and rebel against my flesh and practice the truth. My heart was filled with gratitude, and I didn't know what to say. All my words turned into one phrase—Thank God! At that moment, I remembered these words of God: **"God's disposition is vital and vividly apparent, and He changes His thoughts and attitudes according to the way things develop. The transformation of His attitude toward the Ninevites tells humanity that He has His own thoughts and ideas; He is not a robot or a clay figure, but the living God Himself. He could be angry with the people of Nineveh, just as He could forgive their pasts because of their attitudes. He could decide to bring misfortune upon the Ninevites, and He could also change His decision because of their repentance"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). I realized that God was beside me watching my every word and action, and when I was willing to repent, God gave me another chance.

During the subsequent practice, the sisters pointed out some issues. At first, I was able to treat them correctly and actively sought solutions, but

when the difficulties became a bit greater, I would fall into despondency again and reveal thoughts of wanting to escape. One time, after I had practiced diligently, a sister said my recitation sounded mechanical and that I had actually regressed instead of improving. I felt very heavy-hearted facing such a comment. I had hoped that my practice would yield better results, but it seemed to be worse instead. I lost all motivation to record, and started to think, “This duty is too difficult; I can’t do it.” At that moment, I saw these words of God: **“Currently, bearing testimony to God’s work in the last days and proclaiming God’s words is a significant matter. This is a very important duty, and none of you should underestimate it. Your burden is not light. This is not a small matter, it is not an issue that is only related to personal experiences. This matter has a very wide scope; it relates to the salvation of humankind and the spreading of the kingdom gospel. If you do not understand this matter and do not feel its importance, and still act willfully, throw childish tantrums, or become disgruntled while doing your duty, then this is problematic—you are not fit to undertake this work. The level of your professional skills and your work capability depend on individual caliber and work experience; these are secondary. What is most important is having an upright heart, being able to submit to God, and being willing to pay a price and being loyal in doing your duty”** (God’s Fellowship). God’s words reminded me that the duty I was doing was not a simple task. It involved spreading God’s words and testifying to God’s work in the last days, and could not be treated lightly according to my own will. Thinking of this, I felt brightened and energized. From God’s words, I also found the way to practice. Skills and caliber are secondary; the most important thing is that one needs to have a right heart, be loyal, and be able to keep to their duty—this is what God wants to see. I quieted myself and prayed to God, “God, I

do not want to do my duty with my own corrupt disposition. I need to put in effort and pay the price for this duty, living up to the opportunity You have given me to shoulder the duty. Please guide me.” After praying, I pondered how to address the issues raised by the sister. I realized that the principle of recitation is to be quiet in God’s words, to read, ponder, and understand the meaning of God’s words with sincerity, and to recite based on this foundation, rather than mechanically reading the text. So I calmed my mind and read God’s words, understanding them in light of my own state. After reciting this way, the sister said the effect was much better. I realized this was God’s guidance and felt very happy. After practicing for a period of time, I found ways to improve the results of my recitation, and the issues with my recitation improved somewhat. Thank God for giving me such an experience!

13. My Debate With Pastors

By Jemong, India

In January 2019, a friend gave me testimony on Almighty God's work of the last days. I read Almighty God's words then, and they drew me in really deeply. For me, it was the advent of a new truth—I was overjoyed. Almighty God has explained mysteries of the Bible, mysteries of the incarnation, the root of man's corruption, and the path to casting off sin, being purified and being saved. No human could utter such words. I felt that this was the voice of God, that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. So I happily accepted it and shared this incredible news with my family. My mom, my aunt, and some brothers and sisters accepted Almighty God. We gathered and read God's words every day, enjoying the truths expressed by Almighty God. We felt we were gaining a lot, much more than we had all those years in religion.

Before long, the local pastor and deacons in our village found out about my faith. One evening, a deacon showed up at my house unexpectedly and asked me, "Why haven't you and your mom been attending services?" I told him, "I'm not going to church anymore because the Lord Jesus has returned—He is Almighty God. I've read lots of Almighty God's words, and I'm stunned—I've never read anything so novel. Almighty God has unraveled many biblical mysteries. I've discovered that Almighty God's words are the truth, and He is the returned Lord Jesus we've been waiting for." He heard me out, then responded doubtfully, "The Lord Jesus returned? How could that be?" I told him, "Almighty God has begun the Age of Kingdom and He's doing new work. The Age of Grace is in the past and the Holy Spirit is no longer working in the religious churches. It's like when the Lord Jesus came to work. People

left the temple and followed Him. Now we need to keep up with God's new work to be saved by God in the last days." Seeing I was determined to believe in Almighty God, he said I'd be expelled and then just left. After that, the pastor and deacons went and harassed a family that had just accepted God's work of the last days. The pastor said to them, "You've joined The Church of Almighty God and aren't attending our services. You've been fooled—the Lord hasn't come back. As a pastor, I know everything in the Bible. If Almighty God really were the Lord Jesus returned, I'd definitely know about it." She also said, "If you insist on leaving the church, you have to say in front of everyone that you've turned your back on Jesus. Also, the church won't give you any help whatsoever. On Sunday, you'll have to come to the church to remove your names and announce it to the whole congregation. Otherwise, you'll be run out of the village." I was furious. Everyone has the right to freedom of belief, but they were using such vile tactics to keep people from investigating the true way. If they were benevolent servants, they should have a seeking heart, finding out what The Church of Almighty God is all about and looking into Almighty God's work. But faced with the Lord's return, they just blindly resisted and condemned it. How are they truth seekers? The next day, I went to see the family who underwent disturbance by the pastor. The brother said they believed Almighty God was the true God, so even if they were run out of the village, they'd keep believing in Him. After that, the pastor spread baseless rumors and fallacies to keep people from investigating the true way. This showed me that believing in God and following Him isn't an easy thing. The Lord Jesus was oppressed by the Jewish religion when He came and worked. Not many people followed Him then. Now Almighty God has come to work, and He's also oppressed by the religious world. Most people believe and listen to the clergy, and won't accept the Lord's coming. That

also clarified one fact for me: The true way has been oppressed since ancient times. Few accept the true way and follow God, while many worship humans and follow pastors in religion. Though the pastor hindered and persecuted us, we'd accepted the true way and found the way of eternal life. We are blessed. Understanding this made me stronger in my faith to follow Almighty God.

Later on she reported my faith in Almighty God to the Church Association. One evening, she came to my house, leading a bunch of people. She told me to go to the house of a deacon and clearly explain my faith in Almighty God to all the clergy and co-workers. They were so evil, opposing and condemning God's work of the last days. I didn't have the courage to face them. But I knew if I didn't go meet with them, they'd just fabricate baseless rumors. God had graced me, allowing me to hear His voice and understand some truths. Now that He needed me to bear witness to His work, I couldn't run away. So I prayed, "Almighty God, please guide me and give me the words I need so that I have the faith to testify to Your work." When I got to the deacon's house, I sat down on a chair and saw over a dozen people seated around me, including five pastors with the Church Association, as well as village clergy, and some members of the congregation. Seeing so many people there made me feel timid again, because I didn't know what was coming next. I was praying to God in my heart nonstop to help me calm down. Gradually, I didn't feel so afraid because I knew Almighty God was with me. An older Church Association pastor asked me really sternly, "Why aren't you, your mother and your grandmother attending services? Do you know what the church is? Do you know that leaving it is betraying the Lord Jesus, and He'll abandon you?" I told her, "The Lord Jesus told us: **'For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the middle of them'** (Matthew 18:20).

What is a true church? To be a church, it doesn't matter how many members it has or where it is. No matter how many gather, as long as it has the Holy Spirit's work, God's presence, and the truth's sustenance, it's a church. Now if we look at the church today, does it have the Holy Spirit's work? Does reading God's word bring enlightenment? Are services enjoyable, and do they provide sustenance? Pastors just preach about the same old things and it doesn't help people in their pursuit to know the Lord at all. Believers can't get any life sustenance. They're weak and negative, pursue wealth and indulge in worldly things. Today's church is like the temple in the Lord Jesus' day—it has lost the Holy Spirit's work and can't be called a true church. Why do we want to believe in Almighty God now, and stop attending services? It's because everything Almighty God has expressed is the truth. He has unveiled so many hidden mysteries of the Bible. Reading Almighty God's words has really opened my eyes, brightened my heart, and nurtured my spirit. This is the effect of the Holy Spirit's work. Almighty God is the appearance of the true God, and The Church of Almighty God is the true church. Today, many true believers from different religions and denominations who long for the Lord's coming are reading Almighty God's words online through various means. They've become certain that this is God's voice. Why won't you seek and look into it? You're pastors, preachers in the church. You should proactively lead believers to welcome the Lord. That would be taking responsibility for their lives!" When I was done, they were all silent.

Later the pastor asked me, "You say the Lord Jesus has returned. How would you know?" Then she opened up a Bible and, pointing to a verse, told me, "The Bible says: '**But of that day and hour knows no man, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but My Father only**' (Matthew 24:36). This means no one will know when the Lord comes. So how would you

know?” I said, “If no one at all knew that He had come, how would we welcome Him? The Bible saying ‘**But of that day and hour knows no man**’ means that no one knows the time of His coming, but He will speak after He comes; He will appear to carry out His work. When we hear the Lord’s voice and see the truths He has expressed, won’t we know that He’s returned? Just as the Lord Jesus said: ‘**And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him**’ (Matthew 25:6). ‘**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me**’ (Revelation 3:20). So the key to welcoming the Lord is to listen for His voice. If we hear someone calling that the bridegroom has come, that is, testifying that the Lord has returned, we should go out to meet Him and humbly listen for the Lord’s voice. Only that kind of person is a wise virgin who can welcome the Lord and feast with Him. According to your thinking, no one will know even after the Lord has come. Then how can all these Bible verses be explained, and how will they be fulfilled?” I also gave them an example. I said, “Think of when the Lord Jesus came to work. At first, no one recognized Him as God. When He started working and speaking, the Holy Spirit testified: ‘**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**’ (Matthew 3:17). After that He started showing signs and wonders, healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the way of repentance, and forgiving people’s sins. He began the work of redemption of the Age of Grace. It was only then that people recognized the Lord Jesus as mankind’s Redeemer, as God Himself. Isn’t our faith in the Lord based solely on His work and words? The great disasters have already begun—all the prophecies of the Lord’s coming have been fulfilled. He has returned and is working. He’s expressing the truths needed to purify and save mankind, and He’s doing the work of judgment beginning with God’s

house. He's made a group of overcomers. These are facts that no one can deny. We can't passively await our doom, assessing God's work based on our notions and imaginings. We'll miss our chance to welcome the Lord that way." After that, a young pastor from the Church Association became angry and asked me, "This Almighty God, where is He? Have you seen Him? If not, how can you be sure that He's the return of the Lord Jesus?" In response, I asked her a question, "You believe in the Lord Jesus—have you seen Him? None of us have seen the Lord, so why do we believe in Him?" None of them responded. Then I said, "Back when the Lord Jesus was working in the flesh, hadn't many people seen Him? The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees had seen the Lord's face, but did they recognize Him as the Lord? Did they follow Him? Not only did they not follow Him, but they condemned and rejected Him, ultimately having the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. What does that tell us? Even if you see the Lord's face, if you don't know Him and can't recognize His voice, you'll still oppose Him, and be condemned by Him. If you had been born in that age, and you had seen the Lord Jesus and heard His sermons, would you have recognized Him as Christ? It's really hard to say." When I was done, the pastor retorted, "You say Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. On what basis?" I replied, "The Lord Jesus said: **'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me'** (John 10:27). To determine whether Almighty God is the appearance of God, the key is to see if what He speaks is the truth. I'll read Almighty God's words for you and you can see if this is God's voice. Then you'll know if Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned." Then I read a couple passages of Almighty God's words on my phone to them.

Almighty God says: **"Throughout the universe I am doing My work, and in the East, thunderous crashes issue forth endlessly, shaking all nations and denominations. It is My voice that has led all men into**

the present. I cause all men to be conquered by My voice, to fall into this stream, and surrender before Me, for I have long since reclaimed My glory from all the earth and issued it forth anew in the East. Who does not long to see My glory? Who does not anxiously await My return? Who does not thirst for My reappearance? Who does not pine for My loveliness? Who would not come to the light? Who would not look upon the richness of Canaan? Who does not long for the return of the Redeemer? Who does not adore Him who is great in power? My voice shall spread throughout the earth; I will face My chosen people and speak more words to them, like a mighty thunder shaking the mountains and rivers. I speak My words to the whole universe and to mankind. Hence the words in My mouth have become man's treasure, and all men cherish My words. The lightning flashes from the East all the way to the West. My words are such that man is loath to give them up and at the same time finds them unfathomable, but rejoices in them all the more. Like a newborn infant, all men are glad and joyful, celebrating My coming. By means of My voice, I shall bring all men before Me. Thenceforth, I shall formally enter into the race of men so that they will come to worship Me. With the glory that I radiate and the words in My mouth, I shall make it such that all men come before Me and see that the lightning flashes from the East and that I have also descended unto the 'Mount of Olives' of the East. They will see that I have already long been on earth, no longer as the Son of the Jews but as the Lightning of the East. For I have long since been resurrected, and have departed from mankind's midst, and then reappeared with glory among men. I am He who was worshiped countless ages before now, and I am also the infant forsaken by the Israelites countless ages before now. Moreover, I am the all-glorious Almighty God of the

present age! Let all come before My throne and see My glorious countenance, hear My voice, and look upon My deeds. This is the entirety of My intention; it is the end and the climax of My plan, as well as the purpose of My management: to have every nation worship Me, every tongue acknowledge Me, every man repose his faith in Me, and every people be subject unto Me!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Seven Thunders Peal—Prophesying That the Gospel of the Kingdom Shall Spread Throughout the Universe). **“Christ of the last days brings life, and brings the enduring and everlasting way of truth. This truth is the path by which man gains life, and it is the only path by which man shall know God and be approved by God. If you do not seek the way of life provided by Christ of the last days, then you shall never gain the approval of Jesus, and shall never be qualified to enter the gate of the kingdom of heaven, for you are both a puppet and prisoner of history. Those who are controlled by regulations, by words, and by the shackles of history will never be able to gain life nor gain the perpetual way of life. This is because all they have is turbid water which has been clung to for thousands of years instead of the water of life that flows from the throne. Those who are not supplied with the water of life will forever remain corpses, playthings of Satan, and sons of hell. How, then, can they behold God? If you only try to hold on to the past, only try to keep things as they are by standing still, and do not try to change the status quo and discard history, then will you not always be against God? The steps of God’s work are vast and mighty, like surging waves and rolling thunders—yet you sit passively awaiting destruction, clinging to your folly and doing nothing. In this way, how can you be considered someone who follows the footsteps of the Lamb?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life).

They were all whispering to each other, looking astounded. Before long, that older pastor pointed at me and said, “I believe that what you’ve just read can’t possibly be God’s words. God’s words are merciful, but this is too stern. These are not God’s words.” I said, “You think God is merciful and that He wouldn’t use stern words to expose and curse people. Are you certain this opinion matches the facts? The Lord Jesus said many things rebuking people. Have you really forgotten? He condemned and rebuked the Pharisees, saying, **‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in’** (Matthew 23:13). **‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves’** (Matthew 23:15). There’s plenty more like this. This proves that God’s disposition not only contains mercy and love, but also majesty and wrath. We can’t measure God’s work and words according to our own notions and imaginings. That would be committing the error of judging and delimiting God.” I continued, “The Bible also prophesies God’s judgment work in the last days: **‘For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God’** (1 Peter 4:17). God expresses truths and judges mankind in the last days, sorting all according to their kind, thoroughly separating sheep from goats, wheat from tares, and good servants from evil ones. If God came to work in the last days and remained full of mercy and love, without any righteous judgment and curse, then when could the age come to a close?” Then I read them another passage of Almighty God’s words. Almighty God says: **“Supposing that, in revealing the outcome of man during the last days, God were still to bestow upon man infinite compassion and love and continue to be loving toward him, not subjecting man to righteous judgment but**

rather showing him tolerance, patience, and forgiveness, and pardoning man no matter how grave his sins, without any jot of righteous judgment: when then would all of God's management ever be brought to a close? When would a disposition such as this be able to lead people into mankind's appropriate destination? Take, for example, a judge who is always loving, a judge with a kindly face and a gentle heart. He loves people irrespective of the crimes they may have committed, and he is loving to and forbearing with them whoever they may be. In that case, when will he ever be able to reach a just verdict? During the last days, only righteous judgment can separate man according to their kind and bring man into a new realm. In this way, the entire age is brought to an end through God's righteous disposition of judgment and chastisement" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Vision of God's Work (3)). After hearing that, they didn't have any comebacks. A moment later, the older pastor pointed her finger at me and said in a reprimanding tone, "Do you know where The Church of Almighty God is from? It's from China, and it's been banned by the Chinese government. The country's government doesn't acknowledge it as the true way, so why do you believe in it?" I responded by asking, "Who is the Chinese government? Are they followers of God, or is it an atheistic, satanic regime? As a pastor, how can you believe the words of a satanic regime? That's foolish. By your logic, anything a government doesn't approve of can't be the true way. Does that line up with reality? When the Lord Jesus came and worked, did He not suffer the government's condemnation and persecution? How did He come to be crucified? Wasn't it the Pharisees aligning with the Roman government that got the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross? According to your logic, anything persecuted and banned by a government can't be the true way. So shouldn't you deny and condemn the

Lord Jesus' work? Isn't that absurd and ridiculous? The Bible says: '**And the whole world lies in wickedness**' (1 John 5:19). The entire world lies in Satan's hands. The authorities are corrupt humans, too—do they know God? To this day, we haven't seen any national leaders actively investigate Almighty God's work or lead the people to worship Him. What does that show us? Whether it's a religious country or an atheistic one, none of the rulers are people who know God. How could they possibly tell the true way from false ways? There's no way they could. Their assessments of things are entirely based on satanic logic, and contain no truth." When I'd said my piece, they were all speechless.

After quite a while, that older pastor pointed at me and said, incensed, "If you leave the church and anything happens to your family members, the clergy won't pray for them. They won't be healed, and when they die their soul won't get into heaven. Then what will you do?" I knew in my heart that she was trying to use those old village customs to control me. We used to really adulate the pastors, and we relied on them to pray for us. The pastors were held in high regard by believers, and we relied on them for everything. But since believing in Almighty God, I've learned that clergy can't represent God, and they don't determine whether people get into heaven after they die. So, I said to them, "When something happens in my family in the future, we won't need your prayers." That younger pastor said, "What will you do if no one helps you conduct funerals?" I responded decisively, "If someone in my family dies, we'll bury their body. There's no need to carry out any funeral rites. The Bible says: 'And another of His disciples said to Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, **Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead**' (Matthew 8:21–22). Between a family member's death and the Lord's commands, which is more important? The Lord has clearly instructed us to follow Him and

honor Him as great. That's most important. Why do you stay wrapped up in meaningless rituals instead of seeking the truth and welcoming the Lord's return? People's outcomes and destinations are in God's hands. No human can decide these. And people can't get into heaven just from a pastor's prayers—that's ridiculous." I continued, "Now the Lord has returned and expressed many truths. He has shown us the path to cast off sin so we can be purified and saved. If we don't follow Almighty God or accept the judgment and purification of His words, but live within meaningless religious rites, is that really enough to become purified?" After I said that, they were at a loss for words to rebut me. Then another pastor smiled and said to me, "Jemong, you're a man of caliber, a thinking man. The church values you. If you keep working in the church and get more people to join, the church will become stronger. Together, we can do God's work—that would be wonderful!" I could tell they were being really hypocritical. All they valued was being in charge of more people, because that way they'd get more offerings. They weren't longing for God's appearance. I said to them, "Welcoming the Lord is more important than anything. No matter what you say, I will never stop following Almighty God! You're church pastors. Why don't you lead believers in welcoming the Lord's coming, instead of resisting and condemning it? Aren't you afraid of going against God and being punished by Him?" Then the younger pastor cut me off furiously and said, "Everything we're doing is to protect our flocks. Since you're set on believing in Almighty God, the church will expel you, and you will not be permitted to come steal our sheep!" I got even angrier when I heard her say that. The Lord has returned and He wants to find His sheep. These church leaders should take the initiative to lead believers to investigate the true way, bringing God's sheep before Him. A faithful servant would do this. But that's not what they're doing. To protect their

status and their livelihood, they mislead and deceive believers under the guise of protecting the flock, getting people to go along with them, opposing and condemning God's work. They're so hypocritical—through-and-through evil servants! It reminded me of a quote from Almighty God: **"Today, many people have committed a similar error. They proclaim with all their might the imminent appearance of God, yet at the same time condemn His appearance; their 'impossible' once more confines the appearance of God within the limits of their imagination. And so I have seen many people break into wild and raucous laughter after coming upon the words of God. But is this laughter any different from the condemnation and blasphemy of the Jews? You are not reverent in the presence of the truth, still less do you possess an attitude of yearning. All you do is study indiscriminately and wait with blithe unconcern. What can you gain from studying and waiting like this? Do you think you will receive personal guidance from God? If you cannot discern God's utterances, in what way are you qualified to witness the appearance of God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 1: The Appearance of God Has Ushered in a New Age). What Almighty God's words expose is perfectly clear. These pastors don't treat the truth or God's work with the slightest bit of reverence. They are the antichrists, the evil servants revealed by God in the last days. They have no right to witness God's appearance. Ultimately, once they saw how unshakable my faith in Almighty God was, they couldn't help but let me leave.

They spread notions and fallacies among believers. They didn't allow them to have contact with believers of The Church of Almighty God, and misled them into opposing Him. They warned each and every person they'd be expelled from the church if they followed Almighty God. Lots of people didn't dare to investigate Almighty God's work of the last days because of

their misleading and obstruction. Seeing the clergy so intent on going against God's work made me really angry, and I wanted to reason with them. But I knew my efforts would be in vain. I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten me so I would know what to do. A sister later fellowshipped with me, "Back then the Pharisees insisted that the Lord Jesus come down from the cross to prove He was the Messiah, but He didn't do that. Even though He didn't prove it for them to see, didn't His gospel spread across the whole world? Everything is ruled and arranged by God. He uses the actions of these antichrists so we can tell good from evil. Through them, we see how Satan misleads people and resists God. We can see Satan's evil and shamelessness, despise it, and reject those religious clergy. That's God's wisdom." Hearing her fellowship brightened my heart, and I wasn't constrained by the clergy anymore. Since the pastors kept their churches strictly cut off, we went to preach the gospel in other places first. Before long, a lot of people had investigated and accepted Almighty God's work of the last days.

I read a couple more passages of Almighty God's words after that. They gave me more clarity on the pastors' essence of resisting God. Almighty God says: **"Do you wish to know the root of why the Pharisees opposed Jesus? Do you wish to know the essence of the Pharisees? They were full of fantasies about the Messiah. What is more, they believed only that the Messiah would come, yet did not pursue the life truth. And so, even today they still await the Messiah, for they have no knowledge of the way of life, and do not know what the way of truth is. How, say you, could such foolish, stubborn and ignorant people gain God's blessing? How could they behold the Messiah? They opposed Jesus because they did not know the direction of the Holy Spirit's work, because they did not know the way of truth spoken by Jesus, and,**

furthermore, because they did not understand the Messiah. And since they had never seen the Messiah and had never been in the company of the Messiah, they made the mistake of clinging to the mere name of the Messiah while opposing the essence of the Messiah by any means possible. These Pharisees in essence were stubborn, arrogant, and did not obey the truth. The principle of their belief in God was: No matter how profound Your preaching, no matter how high Your authority, You are not Christ unless You are called the Messiah. Is this belief not preposterous and ridiculous?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew).

“There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God’s work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God’s intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). I used to really look up to the pastors. They’d worked for the Lord for many years and knew the Bible well. They seemed really loving toward others outwardly. In their sermons, they told believers to be watchful and wait patiently for the Lord’s coming, so I thought they were

true believers awaiting the Lord's coming. But the exposure of Almighty God's words and what the facts showed completely obliterated that idea of mine. They appeared devout, but when they heard someone was spreading news of the Lord's coming their true nature that resists and hates God came to light. When I gave them testimony on Almighty God's work of the last days, they were incredibly arrogant, and stubbornly clung to the literal words of the Bible. No matter how authoritative and powerful Almighty God's words were, they wouldn't accept them, but kept resisting and condemning them. They even resorted to threats and intimidation, preventing believers from looking into Almighty God's work. They deliberately schemed to stop people from investigating the true way for the sake of their own status and livelihood. They were afraid if everyone believed in Almighty God, no one would give them offerings, and they'd lose their positions. Everything they did was just like what the Pharisees did against the Lord Jesus 2,000 years ago, which was condemned and cursed by God. Just as the Lord Jesus condemned the Pharisees, saying: **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in"** (Matthew 23:13). **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves"** (Matthew 23:15).

In that face-to-face debate with them, it was entirely Almighty God giving me strength, and the results were thanks to the few truths I'd learned reading Almighty God's words. It was a really special experience in my life. If I didn't believe in Almighty God and hadn't read His words, I'd be just like the other believers, believing in God but worshiping and following man. There's no way I'd have discernment over those hypocritical

Pharisees, those antichrists. I'd have ended up on the wrong path because I worshiped the clergy, and would have been abandoned and eliminated by God. Thank Almighty God!

14. The Consequences of Being Slippery in One's Duty

By Lin Ran, China

In July 2023, I was making videos for the church. But since I hadn't practiced for long, and my technical skills were average, some difficult videos were handled by my partner, Sister Jiang Xin, while I only worked on simple, easy-to-make videos. I thought to myself, "I've just started, I don't know many principles, and my skills aren't great, but since Jiang Xin is here, I'll just learn gradually over time." After some study, I made some progress, but whenever I saw a video that was difficult to make, I would make an excuse not to do it, thinking, "Making this kind of video will be too hard, it requires so much effort and I'd have to pay such a price!" Since I picked only the easy videos to make, the work was relaxing and I felt no pressure. I saw Jiang Xin constantly researching, seeking, and pondering, and I thought, "Jiang Xin is more skilled than I am and even she needs to research sometimes, if I were to make those videos, it would require me to pay an even greater price. That would be so difficult and exhausting! I'll stick to making simple videos." In this way, I did my duty for a while without feeling any pressure. Later, when Jiang Xin encountered difficulties making videos, she would ask me to research and discuss problems with her. I found this really difficult and annoying, so I simply didn't help with this. I kept pushing all the difficult videos onto Jiang Xin as a matter of course, and didn't try to challenge myself at all. When I saw that a lot of work had piled up on Sister Jiang Xin and that she was under a lot of pressure, I didn't want to help her out. Over time, I started feeling sleepy in my duty and didn't make any progress for a long time. I felt that my state wasn't right, and asked myself, "I always use the excuse that I'm new and

still unclear on this job, so I keep accommodating myself, pushing all the difficult videos onto Sister Jiang Xin, not wanting to pay a price or put in effort. Isn't this me running from difficulties and folding in the face of adversity?"

Later, I looked up relevant words of God. God says: **"When doing a duty, people always pick light work, work that isn't tiring, and that does not involve braving the elements outdoors. This is picking easy jobs and shirking hard ones, and it is a manifestation of coveting the comforts of the flesh. What else? (Always complaining when their duty is a little hard, a little tiring, when it involves paying a price.) (Being preoccupied with food and clothing, and the pleasures of the flesh.) These are all manifestations of coveting the comforts of the flesh. When such a person sees that a task is too laborious or risky, they foist it off on someone else; they themselves only do leisurely work, and they make excuses, saying that they are of poor caliber, that they lack work ability, and cannot take on this task—when in fact, it is because they covet the comforts of the flesh. ... Are people who indulge in the comforts of the flesh suitable for doing a duty? As soon as someone brings up the subject of doing their duty, or talks about paying a price and suffering hardship, they keep shaking their heads. They have too many problems, they are full of complaints, and they are filled with negativity. Such people are useless, they are not qualified to do their duty, and should be eliminated"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). God exposes that some people always pick the easy jobs and shirk the hard ones in doing their duty, and that whenever they see difficult work, they push it onto others, and choose only the easy and simple tasks for themselves. Such people indulge in physical comfort and are unworthy of doing a duty. Reflecting on myself, I

realized that I exhibited the same behavior. When partnering with Jiang Xin, I saw that making those complex videos required seeking, pondering, researching, and paying a price, and I found this to be annoying and a real headache, so I used the excuse of being inexperienced to push these things onto Jiang Xin. I picked only simple and easy-to-make videos, so I felt no pressure and was relaxed. Later, when Jiang Xin encountered difficulties making videos and needed my help to research and discuss things, I found it annoying and didn't want to bother putting in the effort. In doing my duty, I pushed the tasks that required effort and sacrifice onto others, indulging in comfort, and being slippery and evasive. Such behavior made me lose all my integrity and dignity. Doing my duty in this way would surely lead to me being spurned and eliminated by God. Only at this point did I feel a little scared. I couldn't continue being unmotivated, perfunctory, and preoccupied with the flesh.

Later, while watching an experiential testimony video, I saw a passage of God's words that fit my state well. Almighty God says: **"The Lord Jesus once said, 'For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has' (Matthew 13:12). What is the meaning of these words? What they mean is that if you don't even carry out or dedicate yourself to your own duty or job, God shall take away what was once yours. What does it mean to 'take away'? How does that make people feel? It could be that you fail to attain that which your caliber and gifts could have allowed you to, and you feel nothing, and are just like a nonbeliever. That is what it is to have everything taken away by God. If, in your duty, you are remiss, and do not pay a price, and you are not sincere, God shall take away what was once yours, He shall take back your right to perform your duty, He shall not give you this right.**

Because God gave you gifts and caliber, but you did not perform your duty properly, expend yourself for God, or pay a price, and you did not put your heart into it, not only will God not bless you, He will also take away what you once had. God bestows gifts on people, giving them special skills as well as intelligence and wisdom. How should people use these things? You must dedicate your special skills, your gifts, your intelligence and wisdom to your duty. You must use your heart and apply everything you know, everything you understand, and everything you can achieve to your duty. By doing so, you will be blessed. What does it mean to be blessed by God? What does this make people feel? That they have been enlightened and guided by God, and that they have a path when they perform their duty. To other people it may seem that your caliber and the things you have learned couldn't enable you to get things done—but if God works and enlightens you, you will not only be able to understand and do those things, but also to do them well. In the end, you will even wonder to yourself, 'I didn't use to be that skilled, but now there are so many more good things inside me—all of them positive. I never studied those things, but now I understand them all of a sudden. How did I suddenly become so smart? How are there so many things that I can do now?' You will not be able to explain it. This is the enlightenment and blessing of God; this is how God blesses people. If you do not feel this when performing your duty or doing your job, then you have not been blessed by God. If doing your duty always feels meaningless to you, if it feels like there is nothing to be done, and you cannot bring yourself to contribute, if you never receive enlightenment, and feel that you don't have any intelligence or wisdom to put to use, then this means trouble. It shows that you do not have the right motive or the right path for performing your duty, and

God does not approve, and your state is abnormal” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness).

After reading God’s words, I realized that my recent lack of progress in making videos was mainly because my attitude toward my duty was wrong. I was afraid of having to worry and exhaust myself, and was unwilling to put effort into my duty, choosing only easy tasks. I didn’t put my mind and energy into my duty, and I was always being slippery and evasive. God despised my attitude toward my duty and had taken away what I originally had. I had made no progress in my duty, and couldn’t even make simple videos well. If I didn’t repent, I might lose my duty altogether. Reflecting on when I used to practice watering newcomers, at the beginning, there were also many principles I didn’t grasp, but the sister I was partnering with fellowshiped with me and helped me. I would ask her whenever I encountered difficulties, and I summarized things, studied, and often prayed to God. At that time, I progressed quickly and was effective in my duty. Compared to now, although I hadn’t been practicing video production for long, there were some techniques I could master if I applied myself and studied them. But I had indulged in physical comfort, lacked the desire to make progress, and was unwilling to pay a price, so my professional skills had not improved and I couldn’t see God’s guidance in doing my duty. God is fair and righteous to people. If we pay a price and put our heart into our duty, we will receive God’s enlightenment and guidance, and we will make progress in both our life entry and professional skills. But if we don’t put our heart into our duty and are slippery and evasive, we will eventually be revealed, and over time, we won’t achieve what we otherwise could have achieved. Reflecting on this, I felt very guilty and remorseful. God’s intention is for me to pay a price and put my heart into my duty, to exercise my function in my duty, and to make better videos to spread the gospel and

testify to God. But I had been lazy and indulged in comfort, I hadn't truly paid a price in my duty and hadn't done what I should have done. I had let God's hopes down. I had been truly lacking in humanity and ignorant of what was good for me! Realizing this, I cried and prayed to God, "Oh God, I shouldn't have performed my duty with that kind of attitude. I really am so untrustworthy! God, I am willing to repent to You. Please scrutinize my heart, and guide and help me."

Afterward, I sought again to understand why I had always withdrawn when faced with difficulties. I read these words of God: **"Today, although the next step of God's work has yet to begin, there is nothing additional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your spirit? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you**

not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? ... A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of

Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). When I read words like “coward” and “beasts,” I felt pained in my heart. I had been exactly the type of person God exposes, someone who cherishes the flesh and does not pursue the truth. In doing my duty, I had indulged in physical comfort, without wanting to pay a price for anything, I had always wanted to do easy and simple tasks, and just muddled through each day. I had been like a pig, just eating, drinking, and sleeping all day long, without any thoughts or goals to pursue. I had had no burden or desire to progress in my duty, and always

yielded to my flesh. This was because I had always used the satanic poisons like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” and “Life is short, so enjoy it while you can,” as rules to live by. Before believing in God, I had been content with the status quo, sought comfort, and lacked any ambition. I had thought that with life being so short, I should enjoy each day in this world rather than making life tiring or hard for myself. After coming to believe in God, I still held onto this view in doing my duty. When I came across difficult videos, I would foist them off on Jiang Xin and look for easy tasks for myself. Later, when the sister’s work piled up and she was under great pressure in her duty, I just steered clear and took things easy, unwilling to help share the burden. I thought only about my own flesh, not about the sister’s difficulties or the church’s work. I had been so selfish and despicable! Reflecting on this, I realized that these poisons instilled by Satan had made me depraved and decadent, without any desire to progress, and living the life of a good-for-nothing. I surely wouldn’t last long doing my duty with such an attitude, and in the end, I would be revealed and eliminated by God.

Later, I came to understand God’s requirements for people from His words. I read this in God’s words: **“Suppose the church arranges a job for you, and you say, ‘... Whatever job the church assigns me, I’ll take it up with all my heart and strength. If there’s something I don’t understand or a problem comes up, I’ll pray to God, seek the truth, resolve problems according to the truth principles, and do the job well. Whatever my duty, I’ll use everything I have to do it well and satisfy God. For whatever I can achieve, I will do my best to shoulder the responsibility that I should bear, and at the least, I will not go against my conscience and reason, or be perfunctory, or be slippery and slack off, or indulge in the fruits of others’ labor. Nothing I do will be**

beneath the standard of conscience.’ This is the minimum standard of human comportment, and one who does their duty in such a way may qualify as a person with conscience and reason. You must at least be clear of conscience in doing your duty, and you must at least be worthy of your three meals a day and not be freeloading. This is called having a sense of responsibility. Whether your caliber is high or low, and whether or not you understand the truth, in any case, you must have this attitude: ‘Since this work was given to me to do, I must treat it seriously, I must make it my concern, and I must use all my heart and strength to do it well. As for whether I can do it perfectly well, I can’t presume to offer a guarantee, but my attitude is that I’ll do my best to perform it well, and I certainly won’t be perfunctory about it. If a problem arises in work, I should take responsibility then, and ensure I draw a lesson from it and do my duty well.’ This is the right attitude”

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). After reading God’s words, I gained a path of practice. God had exalted me to do this duty, so I had to put my heart into doing it well. When faced with difficulties, I couldn’t be slippery or evasive. I needed to really pay a price and do my best to fulfill my duty. I had just started to practice making videos and was not proficient at it, so moving forward, I needed to work hard on improving my professional skills. When I came across difficult videos, I should take them on as long as I was up to the task, or I should partner up with Jiang Xin on them, actually pay a price, ask her about the things I didn’t understand, and learn bit by bit. This way, I would be able to apply the skills I learned to my duty.

One time, I wanted to hand off a difficult video I was making to Jiang Xin again, but I remembered my previous prayer to God to repent, and I realized that when facing difficulties in this video, I wanted to shirk

responsibility again. Wasn't I still being afraid of paying a price and not seeking progress? So I prayed to God, asking Him to lead me to rebel against my flesh and really pay a price. I also pondered how God hoped that I could rebel against my flesh and practice the truth when facing this difficulty, and through making videos, improve my skills. Understanding God's intention, I diligently searched for information and learned some techniques, and in the end, I successfully completed the video. Although making the video took some time and effort, my skills improved. Thank God for His guidance!

15. God's Love in the Midst of Disease

By Jianxin, China

Twenty years ago, I contracted severe rheumatoid arthritis and my whole body was in pain. I visited various major hospitals, but none of the treatments were effective. In the end, I just had to rely on hormonal drugs to control the symptoms, and without medication, all my joints would become stiff and painful. All I could do was lie in bed all day long, as if I were in a vegetative state, unable to move at all. I needed help from others to eat, dress, turn over, and use the bathroom. I was completely useless. I thought, "It would be better to die than to live in such pain." Due to my long-term use of hormonal drugs, my immune system was very weak, I often had coughs and colds, and I also contracted pleurisy. My heart also developed problems, I had over ten different illnesses throughout my body, and my face looked like that of a dead person. In the heat of summer, my husband would turn on the air conditioner indoors, while I would wear cotton-padded clothes and bask in the sun outside. I even had to use an electric blanket to sleep, otherwise I would be too cold to fall asleep. Later, I heard that several acquaintances with the same disease as mine had all died, one after another, and I felt really scared. In the face of such a stubborn illness, I was helpless, and all I could do was pass each day in fear and anxiety.

In 2010, I was fortunate enough to accept Almighty God's work of the last days. From God's words, I learned that God created heaven and earth and all things, that He is sovereign over the fate of all mankind, that everything people enjoy is given by God, and that people should worship God. Every day, I ate and drank God's words, prayed to God, and gathered with brothers and sisters, and without realizing it, my colds and coughs abated. After three months, the pain in my leg joints eased, I stopped using

all medications, including hormonal drugs, my joints became more and more flexible, and I gained some color in my complexion. Everyone who knew me said I seemed like a different person. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart. God is truly almighty and wonderful! This had been an incurable disease and even with medication, I used to suffer so much, but now, with my illness subsiding more and more, I didn't even need medication! I had to believe in God properly, preach the gospel more, and do more good deeds, and maybe then God would see how I expended myself and completely heal my illnesses. After that, I ignored the pain in my legs and preached the gospel to my relatives, friends, classmates, and colleagues. Regardless of wind or rain, scorching heat or freezing cold, or whether a person was near or far, so long as they met the principles for receiving the gospel and were willing to listen to God's words, I went to testify to them about God's work of the last days. Some people lived on the seventh or eighth floor, and I'd have to climb the stairs, but even so, I'd often go to water and support them. Some people had good humanity and were willing to seek and investigate the true way, but they had many family entanglements, so I went to fellowship with them multiple times until they accepted God's work of the last days. At that time, I spread the gospel to many people. Over time, I became well-known for preaching the gospel and was reported by evil people, so the leader arranged for me to do hosting duty. I actively asked to take on some other duties, thinking that by me doing more good deeds God would look after and protect me, and that my hope of salvation would be greater.

In May 2019, I began to feel weak all over, and my joints started hurting again. The pain in the joints of my legs was especially severe, and my only option was to use crutches and grit my teeth to inch forward step by step. The pain made me sweat profusely. I couldn't sit after standing, and

after struggling to sit, I couldn't get up. My whole body ached, even when lying down. My blood pressure exceeded 200 mmHg, and my blood sugar also increased, and even medication couldn't get it under control. I was filled with panic. I was afraid that my arthritis was returning. After going to the hospital for an examination, it turned out that the symptoms were indeed caused by arthritis. My heart skipped a beat, and I thought, "As it's been said, 'Disease or not, if it comes back, it'll be worse than when it started.' Am I going to end up completely paralyzed this time? Even if I live, if I am left paralyzed in bed, I would still be useless. How would I do my duties? In all these years of believing in God, I have expended so much! Just look at how I've spread the gospel. I continued to cooperate despite the pain and managed to spread the gospel to many people. After being reported by evil people for spreading the gospel, I was reassigned as a host, and I gave that duty my all as well. How could my illness have come back again?" I thought about how several acquaintances with the same illness had all died, and how I might be next. The more I thought about it, the more despondent I became. I couldn't gather my thoughts while reading God's words during my devotionals and I didn't feel like praying. I'd spend my days feeling dazed, as if I had fallen into a deep freezer, with my heart frozen solid. I just wanted to spend more time resting and restoring my health to reduce the pain in my body. Later, I heard that a neighbor with the same illness had died, which made me even more afraid, and I thought, "Maybe one day I'll die like my neighbor. If I die now, will all the suffering and sacrifices I have undergone in my duties over the years have been in vain? Not only would I not be saved, but I would also lose all my remaining opportunities to labor and survive." Just thinking about my illness made me unable to eat or sleep. I lived in a state of sorrow, anxiety, and worry, and I was truly tormented inside. I prayed to God, "God, my health is getting worse and worse, and I

am constantly living in an uneasy emotional state. I know this is wrong but I don't know how to resolve it, and even though I know this suffering is permitted by You, I just can't submit. God, please guide me to submit in this situation, and to learn a lesson from it."

I read two passages of God's words: **"When people are unable to see through to, understand, accept, or submit to the environments that God orchestrates and His sovereignty, and when people face various difficulties in their daily lives, or when these difficulties exceed what normal people can bear, they subconsciously feel all kinds of worry and anxiety, and even distress. They don't know what tomorrow will be like, or the day after, or how things will be in a few years' time, or what their future will be like, and so they feel distressed, anxious, and worried about all manner of things. What is the context in which people feel distressed, anxious, and worried about all manner of things? It is that they don't believe in the sovereignty of God—that is, they are unable to believe in and see through to God's sovereignty. Even if they saw it with their own eyes, they wouldn't understand it, or believe it. They don't believe that God holds sovereignty over their fate, they don't believe that their lives are in God's hands, and so distrust arises in their hearts toward God's sovereignty and arrangements, and then blame arises, and they are unable to submit"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). **"Then there are those who are in poor health, who have a weak constitution and lack energy, who are often sick with major or minor illnesses, who cannot even do the basic things necessary in daily life, who cannot live or get about like normal people. Such people often feel uncomfortable and unwell while performing their duties; some are physically weak, some have real illnesses, and of course there are some who have known and potential**

diseases of some kind or other. Because they have such practical physical difficulties, such people often sink into negative emotions and feel distress, anxiety, and worry. ... People with an illness will often think, 'Oh, I'm determined to perform my duty well, but I've got this illness. I ask God to keep me from harm, and with God's protection I need not be afraid. But if I get exhausted when performing my duties, will my condition flare up? What will I do if my condition really flares up? If I need to be admitted to hospital to undergo an operation, I have no money to pay for it, so if I don't borrow the money to pay for my treatment, will my condition get even worse? And if it gets really bad, will I die? Could such a death be considered a normal death? If I really do die, will God remember the duties I've performed? Will I be considered to have done good deeds? Will I attain salvation?' There are also some who know they are sick, that is, they know they have some real illness or other, for example stomach diseases, lower back and leg pain, arthritis, rheumatism, as well as skin diseases, gynecological diseases, liver disease, hypertension, heart disease, and so on. They think, 'If I keep performing my duty, will God's house pay for treatment for my illness? If my illness gets worse and it affects the performance of my duty, will God heal me? Other people have been cured after believing in God, so will I be cured too? Will God cure me, just as He shows kindness to others? If I loyally perform my duty, God should heal me, but if only I wish God to heal me and He doesn't, then what am I going to do?' Whenever they think of these things, they get a profound feeling of anxiety rising up in their hearts. Even though they never stop performing their duty and they always do what they're supposed to, they think constantly about their illness, their health, their future, and about their life and death. Finally, they reach the

conclusion of wishfully thinking, ‘God will heal me, God will keep me safe. God won’t abandon me, and God won’t stand by and do nothing if He sees me getting sick.’ There is no basis at all for such thoughts, and they can even be said to be a kind of notion. People will never be able to resolve their practical difficulties with such notions and imaginings as these, and in their innermost hearts, they feel vaguely distressed, anxious, and worried about their health and their illnesses; they have no idea who will take responsibility for these things, or whether anyone will take responsibility for them at all” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth

I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). What God exposed was exactly my state. Looking back, within less than three months of believing in God, my severe arthritis had almost been healed, so I actively spread the gospel, did my duties, and wanted to prepare more good deeds, thinking maybe God would see my sacrifices and completely heal my illness. When my condition returned and became increasingly severe, to the point where I was almost unable to care for myself, praying to God did not alleviate my condition, so I began to doubt God’s sovereignty, and I worried about becoming paralyzed and unable to care for myself, and that I would be unable to endure the physical suffering. If I went back on hormone medication, and my numerous other diseases returned, then even if I did not die from arthritis, I would die from the other illnesses. If I died, I would have no chance of salvation, nor even any chances to labor and survive. This made me feel weak and distressed, and that all my years doing duties, suffering, and sacrificing had been in vain. When faced with illness, I did not accept it from God, and I did not seek God’s intention. Instead, I misunderstood and complained about God. My attitude toward my duties was also one of indifference. Worried that doing more duties would mean more physical exhaustion, that my condition would deteriorate and that I would die quicker, I did not want to do my

duties, and lived in a state of distress and worry, waiting for death. From God's words I finally understood that the return of my illness had been permitted by God, but I had not recognized God's sovereignty and misunderstood and complained about Him. My heart was filled with complaints, and all I revealed was rebellion and resistance. My state was so dangerous! Realizing this, I felt scared, so I prayed to God, asking Him to lead me to seek the truth to resolve my negative emotions.

Later, I read a passage of God's words, and my perspective shifted somewhat. God says: **"When God arranges for someone to get an illness, whether major or minor, His purpose in doing so is not to make you appreciate the ins and outs of being sick, the harm the illness does to you, the hardships and difficulties the illness causes you, and all the myriad feelings the illness causes you to feel—His purpose is not for you to appreciate sickness through being sick. Rather, His purpose is for you to learn the lessons from sickness, to learn how to feel for God's intentions, to know the corrupt dispositions you reveal and the wrong attitudes you adopt toward God when you're sick, and to learn how to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, so that you can achieve true submission to God and be able to stand firm in your testimony—this is absolutely key. God wishes to save you and cleanse you through sickness. What about you does He wish to cleanse? He wishes to cleanse all your extravagant desires and demands toward God, and even cleanse the various plans, judgments, and schemes you make at all costs to survive and live. God does not ask you to make plans, He does not ask you to judge, and He does not allow you to have any extravagant desires toward Him; He requires only that you submit to Him and, in your practice and experience of submitting, to know your own attitude toward sickness, and to know your attitude toward these bodily**

conditions He gives to you, as well as your own personal wishes. When you come to know these things, you can then appreciate how beneficial it is for you that God has arranged the circumstances of the illness for you or that He has given you these bodily conditions; and you can appreciate just how helpful they are to changing your disposition, to you attaining salvation, and to your life entry. That is why, when illness comes calling, you must not always be wondering how you can escape it or flee from it or reject it” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). From God’s words, I understood that behind the illnesses I faced there was God’s intention, and that it was to make me learn lessons, reflect on and recognize my fallacious views and corrupt disposition, and my extravagant desires in believing in God. I reflected on how my years of doing duties and making sacrifices were done to have God heal my illness. When the pain eased, I thanked and praised God, and was willing to do more duties and prepare more good deeds, but when the pain returned and worsened, I misunderstood and complained about God, thinking it was only right for God to heal me because I had been doing duties. So when my illness returned, and my desires were not fulfilled, I no longer wanted to do my duties. Even when I reluctantly did my duties, I didn’t want to put in any effort or pay a price. In what way did I have any conscience or reason? When this illness befell me, God’s intention was to purify the adulterations in my faith, and change my erroneous views on pursuit, so that I could submit to God and walk the path of pursuing the truth. Yet I did not pursue the truth, and when facing illness, I did not seek God’s intention. Instead, I was always resistant and defiant, wanting God to remove my pain quickly. When that did not happen, I fell into a state of distress, worry, and anxiety and opposed God, losing my chance to gain the truth. If I continued like this without changing, my life would not grow, my corrupt disposition would

not change, and my hope of salvation would become even more remote. The more I understood, the more I felt that believing in God should not be about making demands of Him. I saw how unreasonable I was. I quickly prayed to God, “Oh God, I do not pursue the truth or understand Your work, nor do I submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements. I am too rebellious! God, please guide me to understand myself.”

Later, I read a passage of God’s words: **“Before deciding to do their duty, deep in their hearts, antichrists are brimming with expectations toward their prospects, gaining blessings, a good destination, and even a crown, and they have the utmost confidence in attaining these things. They come to the house of God to do their duty with such intentions and aspirations. So, does their performance of duty contain the sincerity, genuine faith and loyalty that God requires? At this point, one cannot yet see their genuine loyalty, faith, or sincerity, because everyone harbors an entirely transactional mindset before they do their duty; everyone makes the decision to do their duty driven by interests, and also based on the precondition of their overflowing ambitions and desires. What is the antichrists’ intention in doing their duty? It’s to make a deal, to make an exchange. It could be said that these are the conditions they set for doing duty: ‘If I do my duty, then I must obtain blessings and have a good destination. I must obtain all the blessings and benefits that god has said are prepared for humankind. If I can’t obtain them, then I won’t do this duty.’ They come to the house of God to do their duty with such intentions, ambitions, and desires. It seems like they do have some sincerity, and of course for those who are new believers and are just starting to do their duty, it can also be called enthusiasm. But there is no genuine faith or loyalty in this; there’s only that degree of enthusiasm. It can’t be called sincerity. Judging from**

this attitude antichrists have toward doing their duty, it is wholly transactional and filled with their desires for benefits like gaining blessings, entering the kingdom of heaven, obtaining a crown, and receiving rewards. So, it appears from the outside that many antichrists, before being expelled, are doing their duty and have even forsaken more and suffered more than the average person. What they expend and the price they pay are on par with Paul, and they do no less running about than Paul either. This is something everyone can see. In terms of their behavior and their will to suffer and pay the price, they ought not to receive nothing. However, God does not regard a person based on their outward behavior, but based on their essence, their disposition, what they reveal, and the nature and essence of every single thing that they do. When people judge and treat others, they determine who they are based solely on their external behavior, how much they suffer, and what price they pay, and this is a grave mistake” (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). I saw that God exposed antichrists as doing their duties for blessings and crowns, that their sacrifices are all done to bargain with God for the blessings of entering the kingdom of heaven, and that such performance of duty is not loyal or sincere at all. If they do not receive blessings, they will complain greatly, and even argue back with Him and try to get even. I compared my own behavior with this and saw it was the same as that of an antichrist. At first, when I saw my chronic arthritis healed after believing in God, I was filled with gratitude toward God, and with the mindset of having God heal me and then being able to secure a good destination, I actively spread the gospel and did my duties. Regardless of wind, rain, heat, or cold, I worked tirelessly to prepare good deeds by spreading the gospel, and even if relatives, friends, and colleagues mocked and slandered me, I didn't back down. However, when my illness

returned, and when I saw that people with the same illness died, I complained that God was not protecting me, and didn't even want to do my duties anymore, fearing that taking on more worries might worsen my condition and hasten my death. Through the revelation of facts, I realized that my belief in God and my performance of duties were just done to bargain with God, and that my sacrifices were all to have God heal me and achieve a good outcome and destination. When my desire for blessings was shattered, I was unwilling to even do a bit more duties, fearing incurring losses to my physical interests. I had no loyalty or sincerity toward God at all. I said that I would do my duties well and repay God's love, but the truth was, I was cheating God, trying to use my duties as a bargaining chip for future blessings. I was truly selfish, despicable, and deceitful! I upheld the satanic law of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" and in everything I did, it was all for myself, and I never lifted a finger without a reward. After coming to believe in God, everything I did was still for blessings and benefits. I was greedy and selfish and if I was unable to profit, then I would turn against God to get even. I had no God-fearing heart and was truly without humanity!

I then recalled a passage of God's words: **"You must know what kind of people I desire; those who are impure are not permitted to enter into the kingdom, those who are impure are not permitted to besmirch the holy ground. Though you may have done much work, and worked for many years, in the end if you are still deplorably filthy, then it will be intolerable to the law of Heaven that you wish to enter My kingdom! From the foundation of the world until today, never have I offered easy access to My kingdom to those who curry favor with Me. This is a heavenly rule, and no one can break it!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). From God's words, I

understood that only those who obtain the truth and have a changed disposition can enter God's kingdom. God likes honest people. Honest people love the truth, and do their duty without bargaining or making demands. They can earnestly do the duty of a created being, and such people are the ones God wants to save. However, those who believe in God but do not pursue the truth and only bargain with God for blessings complain about and resist God once their desires are thwarted. Such people, no matter how much they busy themselves or suffer, will still be eliminated by God. This is determined by God's righteous and holy essence. In my duties and faith in God, I tried to bargain with God, treating God as a treasure trove, and as a doctor to heal my illness. When my desires were not fulfilled, I clamored against and resisted God. I was truly shameless! God is the Creator, and I am a created being. Doing my duty is my responsibility and obligation. Making such unreasonable demands of God and having such intentions in my duties, how could this not make God detest and loathe me? I thought of Paul. From the very beginning, he worked and expended himself just to gain a crown of righteousness. He traveled across most of Europe to spread the gospel, went through much pain, and did a lot of work. But all the things he did weren't to repay God's love or to do the duty of a created being, but rather to gain blessings and rewards for himself, so in the end he could say these words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Paul's sacrifices and expenditures were not sincere or submissive. They were only done to bargain with God, and to deceive and use Him. In the end, he offended God's disposition and was cast into hell. In my faith, I always wanted God to heal my illness, to satisfy my selfish desires, and like Paul, I always wanted to receive blessings from God. If I did not make amends, my final outcome would be

the same punishment as Paul's. Doing my duty with such despicable intentions and still wanting God's approval, just how deluded was I? Realizing this, I felt ashamed, embarrassed, and guilty. I thought of how God incarnated twice on earth, suffering all kinds of human hardships to save us corrupt people, speaking so many words and personally leading and watering us in obscurity, never asking us for anything, nor demanding anything from us. I enjoyed so many truths provided by God, and doing my duty is what I, as a created being, should do, yet I still wanted to bargain with God and make demands of Him. I had been truly wicked! I thought about how I, on the brink of death, had had the chance to hear God's voice and return to His house, to eat and drink God's words and enjoy the provision of life, and how God had healed my illness and allowed me to live until now. All of this had been God's care and protection. Everything God had done for me was His love and salvation. Being able to do some duty was God's grace and what I should do. But I didn't know to be grateful, and instead used these as capital to bargain with God, and make constant demands of God. I had truly lacked conscience and humanity, and owed so much to God! The more I thought about it, the more regretful I became, and I prayed to God in my heart, vowing that from then on, I would no longer live to gain blessings, that I would pursue the truth, submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and do my duty properly.

Afterward, I read more of God's words, and understood how to correctly handle illness and death. God says: **"Whether or not someone will get sick, what serious illness they will get, and what their health will be like at each stage of life cannot be changed by the will of man, but rather are all predestined by God. ... Therefore, the kind of sickness that will afflict people's bodies at what time or at what age and what their health will be like are all things arranged by God and people**

cannot decide these things for themselves; just like the time when someone is born, they are not able to decide it for themselves. So, is it not foolish to feel distressed, anxious, and worried about things you cannot decide for yourself? (Yes.) People should set about resolving the things they can resolve themselves, and for those things they cannot do themselves, they should wait for God; people should submit silently and ask God to protect them—this is the mindset people should have. When illness really does strike and death really is near, then people should submit and not complain or rebel against God or say things that blaspheme against God or things that attack Him. Instead, people should stand as created beings and experience and appreciate all that comes from God—they should not try to choose things for themselves. This should be a special experience that enriches your life, and it's not necessarily a bad thing, right? Therefore, when it comes to illness, people should first resolve their wrong thoughts and views concerning the origin of the illness, and then they will no longer worry about this; moreover, people have no right to control known or unknown things, nor are they capable of controlling them, as all these things are under the sovereignty of God. The attitude and principle of practice people should have are to wait and submit. From understanding to practice, all should be done in line with the truth principles—this is to pursue the truth” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). “If someone were to beg for death, they may not necessarily die; if they were to beg to live, they may not necessarily live. All this is under the sovereignty and predestination of God, and it is changed and decided by the authority of God, by God’s righteous disposition, and by God’s sovereignty and arrangements. Therefore, say you contract a serious illness, a potentially fatal serious illness, you will not necessarily die—

who decides whether you will die or not? (God.) God decides. And since God decides and people cannot decide such a thing, what are people feeling anxious and distressed about? It's like who your parents are, and when and where you are born—these things cannot be chosen by you, either. The wisest choice in these matters is to let things take their natural course, to submit, and not to choose, not to expend any thought or energy on this matter, and not to feel distressed, anxious, or worried about it. Since people are not able to choose for themselves, expending so much energy and thought on this matter is foolish and unwise" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). After reading God's words, I understood that the timing and type of illness a person has are all under God's sovereignty and preordination and not up to human choice, and that people should let go of negative emotions like distress, worry, and anxiety, face these things calmly, submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, and seek God's intention to learn lessons. Contemplating God's words, I felt a sudden enlightenment in my heart. When I get sick, the severity of my illness, and when I die, are all within God's orchestrations. It is not as if I can avoid death by fearing it, nor can I die simply by wanting to. My severe illness, paralysis, or death are all permitted by God, and I have no right to complain or demand things from God. I thought of how when Job came up against sickness and calamity, he didn't complain against God or lose faith. Instead, he praised God's righteousness from the bottom of his heart, saying: "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21). I, having enjoyed the watering and provision of so many of God's words, should not make any demands of God when facing sickness. Whether God takes my illness away or lets it remain with me forever, it is all part of God's goodwill and I should not complain or make demands. Even if one

day I become paralyzed or face death, I will still submit to the Creator's arrangements. What I needed to do now is to correctly face illness and death, let go of distress, anxiety, and worry, and entrust everything to God. I reflected again on how over these last twenty years, those who had the same illness as I did, regardless of their age, whether they got sick early or late, many of them died. If it were not for God's protection, I would not be alive today. The fact that I am alive today and enjoy the watering of so many of God's words is already God's grace. Understanding these things, I no longer felt afraid of when I might die, and I became willing to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. After that, every day I focused on eating and drinking God's words, contemplating God's words, writing experiential articles, and regardless of the severity of my illness, I prayed, ate and drank God's words, attended gatherings, and did my duties as usual. Sometimes when the illness relapsed severely, I prayed to God and drew close to Him, asking Him to keep my heart in submission. At the same time, I continually reflected on and recognized the impure intentions within me, and promptly sought the truth to resolve them. By practicing like this, my relationship with God became closer, and I felt that this illness was a great protection for me. Later, without realizing it, the pain throughout my body eased, and my blood pressure and blood sugar also returned to normal. I knew this was God's mercy and protection for me, and I thanked and praised God in my heart!

Later, I read more of God's words: **“Tell Me, who among the billions of people all across the world is so blessed to hear so many of God's words, to understand so many of the truths of life, and understand so many mysteries? Who among them can personally receive God's guidance, God's provision, His care and protection? Who is so blessed? Very few. Therefore, you few being able to live in God's house today,**

receive His salvation, and receive His provision, makes it all worth it even if you were to die right now. You are so very blessed, isn't that right? (Yes.) Looking at it from this perspective, people should not be scared stiff by the matter of death, nor should they be constrained by it. Even though you haven't enjoyed any of the glory and wealth of the world, yet you have received the pity of the Creator and heard so many of God's words—isn't this blissful? (It is.) No matter how many years you live in this life, it's all worth it and you have no regrets, because you have been constantly performing your duty in God's work, you have understood the truth, understood the mysteries of life, and understood the path and goals you should pursue in life—you have gained so much! You have lived a worthwhile life!" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). After reading God's words, I was moved to tears. I had been fortunate to hear God's voice in the final age of God's management plan, live under God's care and protection, enjoy the supply and watering of so many of His words, and understand so many mysteries of the truth, enjoying blessings that people throughout history have not experienced. Even if I were to die now, it would be worth it. Since I am still alive, I must cherish each day I have left and diligently do my duties. My pain is easing day by day, the swelling in my leg joints has greatly reduced, my right ankle joint has basically returned to normal, and the pain throughout my body has also lessened. The brothers and sisters say that I've got more color in my face, that I'm glowing with health, and that it's as if I've become a different person. I am so thrilled, and in my heart, I continually thank God for His love and salvation!

It is through the revelation of illness that I have finally realized my views on believing in God were wrong, that I was not fulfilling my responsibilities and obligations as a created being, but rather seeking

blessings and using my duties to bargain with God, thereby losing the conscience and reason of a normal person. Today, I have some understanding of my corrupt disposition and some changes in my erroneous views on pursuit. These are the results of God's words, and moreover, they are God's love. Thank God for His salvation!

16. The Little Things in Life Are Also Learning Opportunities

By Qin Xin, China

For a period of time, I had to hide in the host house to do my duties to avoid being hunted by the Chinese Communist Party. One day, after the supervisor came back from a meeting, she fellowshipped some truth principles about discerning people. I couldn't help but feel envious in my heart, thinking, "It's still better to be able to go out and do duties. One will be able to attend more gatherings, gain more truths, and enter into the truth more quickly, unlike me, who does a text-based duty all day without going out. Apart from my tasks at hand, I only interact with the couple from the host family and their dog. My social circle is so small that I barely see anyone. There's not even a situation where I can reveal my corruption. How can I know myself? How can I gain more truths?" At that moment, I thought, "God determines people's outcomes based on whether they have the truth. If I end up not gaining the truth and my disposition doesn't change, can I still be saved?" When I thought about this, I didn't want to do my text-based duty anymore. I wanted to ask the supervisor to assign me a duty that involves more interaction with people and more gatherings. Afterward, I felt that this was not sensible. The duties assigned to people were based on a comprehensive assessment of their calibers and strengths. By picking and choosing which duty to do, I was not being obedient. I stared at the computer, thinking one way and then another, unable to calm my heart.

The next afternoon, when I saw the supervisor going out for another meeting, I felt particularly envious, thinking, "Being a supervisor is great. Not only do they often meet with the leaders and understand many truths,

but they also practice solving problems with the truth in different groups. Every day they make some gains, and their life progresses so quickly! My duty keeps me indoors, which is safe, but with fewer gatherings, how can I gain truths?" I couldn't help but have complaints and didn't want to continue this duty. But then I thought about what the supervisor had said about the difficulty in finding text-based personnel. If I said I didn't want to do this duty, wouldn't that be creating trouble for the church? So, I could only stick with it. Although I continued working, I felt no sense of burden in my heart. For the next two days, my computer kept crashing, and coupled with my lack of dedication to my duties, the work was delayed. The supervisor reminded me not to just look for external causes but to reflect on my own state. Thus, I shared what I had revealed recently with the supervisor. The supervisor asked, "Did you seek the truth to solve your state? You're not seeking the truth to solve your revealed corruption. You're not learning the lessons right in front of you. Do you think changing your duty will help you learn them?" The supervisor's words left me speechless. What he said was indeed right. I should focus on learning lessons from the matters at hand and seeking the truth to solve my corruption.

Later, I read these words of God: **"Within God's words are the truths that man needs to possess, things that are the most beneficial and helpful to mankind, the tonic and sustenance that your body needs, things that help man restore his normal humanity, and the truths that man should be equipped with. The more you practice God's word, the more quickly your life will blossom, and the clearer the truth will become. As you grow in stature, you will see things of the spiritual realm more clearly, and the more strength you will have to triumph over Satan. Much of the truth that you do not understand will be made clear when you practice the word of God. Most people are satisfied to**

merely understand the text of God's word and focus on equipping themselves with doctrines rather than on deepening their experience in practice, but is that not the way of the Pharisees? Can they gain the reality of the phrase, 'The word of God is life' by doing this? A person's life cannot grow simply by reading God's word, but only when the word of God is put into practice. If it is your belief that to understand God's word is all that is needed to have life and stature, then your understanding is flawed. Truly understanding God's word occurs when you practice the truth, and you must understand that 'only by practicing the truth can it ever be understood.' Today, after reading the word of God, you can merely say that you know God's word, but you cannot say that you understand it. Some say that the only way to practice the truth is to understand it first, but this is only partially correct, and is certainly not entirely accurate. Before you have knowledge of a truth, you have not experienced that truth. Feeling that you understand something you hear in a sermon is not truly understanding—this is just taking possession of the literal words of the truth, and it is not the same as understanding the true meaning therein. Just having a superficial knowledge of the truth does not mean that you actually understand it or have knowledge about it; the true meaning of the truth comes from having experienced it. Therefore, only when you experience the truth can you understand it, and only then can you grasp the hidden parts of it. Deepening your experience is the only way to grasp the connotations, and to understand the essence of the truth"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Once You Understand the Truth, You Should Put It Into Practice). God's words made me understand that truly understanding the truth requires practicing and entering into it in real life, and only those who focus on practicing can understand the essence of the truth. Merely

reading God's words or listening to others' fellowship without focusing on practicing or entering into them, one can only understand doctrines, and not truly understand the truth. I thought of two leaders I had known before. They worked from dawn till dusk, holding gatherings and fellowshiping everywhere with brothers and sisters. They read a lot of God's words and attended numerous gatherings with higher-level leaders. Although they understood many words and doctrines, they didn't focus on examining their own revealed corruption or practicing God's words. One of the leaders always exalted and testified about himself, bringing brothers and sisters before him, and eventually became an antichrist. The other leader was obsessed with status, and anyone who didn't submit to him or gave him suggestions would be tormented by him, and he was eventually expelled from the church for his many evil deeds. However, some brothers and sisters had duties that didn't put them in the spotlight and involved limited contact with others, but they focused on self-reflection and knowing themselves according to God's words, and their lives grew over time. Some even wrote experiential testimony articles. I also thought of Peter from the Age of Grace. He heard many sermons from the Lord Jesus, but he wasn't just satisfied with hearing them. He often pondered over the Lord's words and focused on practicing them in daily life. Through practicing the truth, he received God's enlightenment and guidance, and by gradually experiencing in this way, the truth became his life, and he gained the reality of being submissive to God, fearing God, and loving God. Similarly, by now I had heard a lot of God's words, and many sermons and fellowships on life entry, but because I hadn't pursued the truth, or focused on reflecting on myself when things happened, and I had rarely sought the truth while doing things, my gains had been minimal. From this, I saw that merely focusing on equipping oneself with doctrines, no matter how much one

understands, does not mean one understands the truth. I thought about how previously I had often read about the truth of submitting to God, and had understood that in all circumstances, I must hold fast to my duty and submit to God's orchestration and arrangements, but when the environment set by God hadn't matched my notions, I saw that I had lacked the reality of submission. Thinking that this duty was not in line with my desires, I had resisted and been unwilling to submit. I saw that however many fellowships I had listened to, it didn't mean I had understood or gained the truth. What I had understood were just words and doctrines, and if I didn't focus on practicing the truth, I still could not truly gain it, nor could my life disposition be changed.

I continued to seek based on my state and came across a passage of God's words, which says: **"The transformation of a corrupt disposition does not happen overnight. One must continually reflect on and examine themselves in all matters. They must examine their actions and behaviors in light of God's words, try to understand themselves, and find the path of practicing the truth. This is the way to address a corrupt disposition. It is necessary to reflect upon and explore corrupt dispositions which reveal themselves in daily life, to practice dissection and discernment based on one's understanding of the truth, and to gradually break through, so that one is able to practice the truth and align all one's actions with the truth. Through such pursuit, practice, and self-understanding, these revelations of corruption begin to diminish, and there is hope that one's disposition will eventually be transformed. This is the path. The transformation of one's disposition is a matter of growth in their life. One must grasp the truth and practice it. Only by practicing the truth can they address the problem of a corrupt disposition. If a corrupt disposition continues to constantly**

reveal itself, even to the point of revealing itself in every action and word, it means one's disposition has not been transformed. Any matters related to a corrupt disposition should be earnestly dissected and explored. One should seek the truth in order to unearth and address the root causes of a corrupt disposition. This is the only way to completely resolve the problem of a corrupt disposition. Once you have found this path, there is hope for a transformation in your disposition. These are not hollow matters; they are relevant to real life. The key lies in whether individuals can wholeheartedly and diligently apply themselves to the truth realities, and whether they can practice the truth. As long as they are able to practice the truth, they can gradually begin to cast off their corrupt disposition. Then they can conduct themselves according to God's requirements and according to their station. By finding their place, standing firm in their role as a created being, and becoming a person who truly worships and submits to God, they will be approved of by God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). God's words have made it very clear that man's corrupt dispositions are revealed every day. In every matter and every word spoken, there may be corrupt dispositions and erroneous thoughts and views mixed in. People need to seek the truth to recognize and resolve these issues. Ultimately, whether one can gain the truth and achieve a change in disposition depends on whether one pursues and practices the truth. It's not that the more people you interact with, the more corruption you reveal, or that if you don't go out and interact with fewer people, you reveal less corruption. This was my own notion and imagining. In reality, even if someone has a duty that involves little interaction with others, as long as they bear a burden for their own life entry, pay attention to their viewpoints and thoughts revealed in every

matter, carefully examine them, and seek the truth in a timely manner to resolve any corruption discovered, they can still gain the truth and experience change. Thinking about myself, although my current duty involved little interaction with people, I had still revealed a lot of corruption in my work. Sometimes, when the work was busy and required staying up late, I had worried about overusing my eyes due to a minor eye problem, fearing that if my eyes failed, I wouldn't be able to keep doing my duty and be saved, so I had slacked off and delayed the work. At other times, I had been perfunctory in my duty, not checking the details of my work, which had resulted in rework and delays in the work's progress. I saw that my scummy nature was serious. I also recalled that previously, when I had a duty that involved meeting people and attending meetings daily, even though I had revealed a lot of corruption, I had used being busy with duties as an excuse to avoid reflecting on myself, rarely seeking the truth to resolve my corruption. I had been through many experiences and revealed much corruption, but hadn't gained much truth. Now, doing the text-based duty, I was busy focusing solely on getting things done every day, rarely coming before God to reflect on my corruption. Besides doing my duty, my mind was often in a state of emptiness, or I would think about fleshly enjoyment, family affection, fame, and status—all things unrelated to the truth. There was no progress in my life entry. I saw that gaining the truth didn't depend on the duty that one did. The key was whether they focused on self-reflection, and whether they seriously put in efforts to resolve their revealed corruption. If they didn't seek the truth and reflect on themselves, then even if they became a supervisor, they wouldn't gain the truth and couldn't be saved. Facing these facts, I saw how absurd and erroneous my views had been! Because I hadn't understood the truth, I had viewed things from fallacious perspectives, always wanting to abandon this duty and not

submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. I had also done my duty half-heartedly, and if I continued this way, it could only delay the work and make God spurn me. I recognized how very important it was to have correct thoughts and views when pursuing the truth. Understanding this, I was no longer picky about my duty, but was willing to seize the current opportunity to do my duty, pay close attention to my thoughts and views when things happened, and seek the truth to resolve them promptly.

In my reflection, I realized that my inability to submit to do my current duty was not only due to my fallacious views but also to my desire to gain blessings. I had thought that, by doing this duty, I would gain less truths, which meant my hope for blessings was slim, so I hadn't wanted to do this duty. I saw that my intent in believing in God and doing duties had been wrong. I read these words of God: **"People believe in God in order to be blessed, to be rewarded, to be crowned. Doesn't this exist in everyone's heart? It is a fact that it does. Although people don't often talk about it, and even cover up their motive and desire to obtain blessings, this desire and motive deep in people's hearts has always been unshakable. No matter how much spiritual theory people understand, what experiential knowledge they have, what duty they can perform, how much suffering they endure, or how much of a price they pay, they never let go of the motivation for blessings hidden deep in their hearts, and always silently toil in its service. Isn't this the thing buried deepest inside people's hearts? Without this motivation to receive blessings, how would you feel? With what attitude would you perform your duty and follow God? What would become of people if this motivation to receive blessings that is hidden in their hearts was gotten rid of? It is possible that many people would become negative, while some would become demotivated in their duties. They would lose interest in their**

belief in God, as if their soul had vanished. They would appear as if their heart had been snatched away. This is why I say the motivation for blessings is something hidden deep in people's hearts" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). God's words exposed my state. In believing in God, forsaking things, expending myself, and working hard, my purpose had been solely to receive blessings. If I couldn't receive blessings, I lost the motivation to do my duty, and I lacked enthusiasm for everything. Ever since I began believing in God, I was always enthusiastic about doing my duty, giving up my job and marriage, and willing to suffer and pay a price in my duty. When I was assigned to this text-based duty, I thought that this duty involved little outside gatherings and fewer opportunities to gain the truth, which would hinder my salvation. So I wanted the supervisor to give me a different duty, and I complained that the duty assigned to me was inappropriate. I began to be perfunctory in doing my duty, slacking off and delaying the work. I saw that my sacrifices and efforts in doing my duties were driven by my desire for blessings. In my faith, I only considered my own interests, treating my duty as a means to gain blessings. If a duty seemed beneficial for me to gain blessings, I was eager to cooperate; if it didn't, I became negative and resistant. I wasn't pursuing to submit to and satisfy God, nor was I doing my duty as a created being with sincerity toward God. Pursuing in this way would only lead to God's detestation and ultimately being eliminated by Him. I should obey the church's arrangements, do my duties diligently and conscientiously, focus on reflecting on myself in all matters to learn lessons, and pursue a change in disposition.

In the days that followed, I focused on learning lessons from things I encountered. The brother at the host house was enthusiastic about doing his duty but didn't pay much attention to life entry. In the past, I helped him

with good intentions, always trying to make him know himself on things that happened, which led to his resistance and repulsion, and I felt wronged, wondering why my good intentions weren't appreciated. Through reflection, I realized that I had an arrogant disposition and was forcing others to listen to me. Also, I lacked principles in helping others. Later, I read "The Principles of Helping Others Lovingly," and understood that helping others should at least not cause them to stumble but benefit them, and that I should treat others according to their stature, guiding them patiently and kindly without forcing them to accept my views. Moreover, some time ago, many brothers and sisters went out of town to preach the gospel. I couldn't go due to certain reasons, and I felt very negative and dejected, complaining about why God allowed this to happen to me. Later, I focused on seeking the truth, and by reading God's words and reflecting upon myself, I recognized my fallacious views and my intent to seek blessings. I thought that going out of town to do duties provided more opportunities to practice, and thus greater hope for gaining the truth and salvation. When this goal wasn't met, I became negative and complained. I realized that as a created being, I should submit to the Creator's orchestration and arrangements, and understood that whether one can gain the truth depends on whether they strive for and pay a price for the truth, not on where they do their duties. I should hold fast to my duty, pursue the truth and learn lessons in my current environment, and do my duty well. This was what I should pursue.

Reflecting on my experiences during this time, I understood that in belief in God, whether one can gain the truth doesn't depend on what duty one does, but on whether they love and practice the truth. If one is serious with the daily matters that come up, focusing on reflecting on their corruption and seeking the truth to resolve it, putting efforts into a change in

disposition, they will make some gains every day. Now, I no longer resist doing this text-based duty and can submit. I am also willing to cherish this duty and put effort into pursuing the truth.

17. I Only Just Realized That I Lack the Truth Reality

By Guang Chun, China

In August of 2022, an article of experiential testimony that I wrote was made into a video and uploaded online. I was very surprised and excited, and I quickly went to tell one of the sisters whom I knew fairly well about it. At the time, I didn't make it too widely known, as I knew having this experiential understanding was due to God's enlightenment and guidance and that I shouldn't show myself off. Several months later, two more experiential testimony articles that I wrote were also made into videos and uploaded. This time, I couldn't restrain my excitement any longer, and I thought to myself, "Three of my experiential testimony articles are chosen to be made into videos. This is the most of anyone in our church, which proves that I have some practical experience, that I know how to know myself, and that I can share experiential testimony. It looks like I'm not too far from attaining salvation." At the time, I happened to be gathering together with several sisters, and I thought to myself, "If they knew that my articles of experiential testimony were filmed into videos and put online, they would certainly envy me and think highly of me. They would think that I was someone who pursued the truth and had life entry." I thought of what Sister Xiaoxiao said when she was talking about her state a couple days earlier. In her heart, she felt opposition toward the person in charge supervising and checking up on her work, and she didn't know how to resolve such a state. So, I said, "An article of experiential testimony that I wrote discusses the same state as Xiaoxiao's. It's about being unwilling to accept my leader's supervision when doing my duty. We can all take a look at it together." Then, I sent the video to the sisters, and analyzed in detail

how, during this experience, I was able to target my state and dissect and recognize it. After Xiaoxiao watched the video, her expression revealed a look of envy. Another sister named Li Qi said, “I don’t know how to seize hold of my corrupt revelations and reflect on and know myself like you do, or how to seek the relevant truths to resolve them. I only have a rough understanding of my state. Now, fellowshipping like this, I understand a bit about the path to life entry. I truly lack so much.” I was very happy, and I thought to myself, “I really do understand the truth and have life entry, and I can resolve your states. I can also talk about paths to practice.” I thought I was better than everyone else there, and I was full of confidence. Before, Li Qi was living in a negative state, and she wasn’t willing to come out and gather, so I purposefully asked her, “Are you willing to participate in the next gathering?” Li Qi happily replied, “Yes, I’m willing; I’ll participate as long as you’re there. Before, I didn’t know how to focus on life entry, and now I have some understanding. Attending gatherings is so beneficial!” Seeing Li Qi’s satisfied expression, I felt a great sense of accomplishment, and thought that I was an excellent leader. Not only could I resolve work-related problems, I could also guide brothers and sisters to pursue life entry. During that time, I often lived in a state of self-admiration. I thought that I was amazing, and no matter where I went, I always thought that I was the person with the most experience, the most life entry, and the most truth reality.

At one gathering, Sister Yi Ran asked me to share how I did my work. Hearing this, I couldn’t help but feel a bit happy. I thought to myself, “I see that you all don’t know how to work. Just wait, I’ll tell you all about how I do my work and show you that I have work capability.” At the beginning, I said modestly, “When I first started doing this duty, I also didn’t know how to work, and I didn’t know how to organize my priorities.” Next, I let loose

a string of words about how I did my work. I saw that the brothers and sisters were all diligently listening to my fellowship, and casting looks of envy at me. I thought that my fellowship was quite good, and I was extremely happy. After that, I went to another group's gathering. When I was fellowshiping, I pondered, "How can I fellowship so that the brothers and sisters see that I have work capability?" I thought that the gospel work I was in charge of had produced some results, and so I emphasized how I took charge of this gospel work. I said, "First, one must properly arrange their personnel. I arranged the brothers' and sisters' duties according to their different calibers and specialties. Also, I was relatively focused on resolving the gospel-preaching personnel's states and issues. When I put my heart into the gospel work, the number of people gained increased each month. The brothers and sisters praised me, saying that I was of high caliber and had work capability." Seeing that they were all listening intently, I felt happy, but also regretful. Because, at the time, there were only three people listening to my fellowship. I thought to myself, "It would be great if there could be more people to listen and know about my work capability." After the gathering, my heart was ill at ease. I had a faint feeling that I may have been exalting and testifying to myself. But I reconsidered this, and thought that this was just my experience, and that everything I said was a fact. It didn't amount to exalting and testifying to myself. Just when I was reveling in my happiness, I suddenly received a sister's letter. In her letter, she pointed out and exposed my problem: "When you fellowship at gatherings, you always show yourself off, talking about how you do your work, what results you achieve in the end, and how others think highly of you. You discuss these in great detail, but I hear nothing about how you bear witness to God. Listening to your fellowship, I also thought very highly of you, and thought that you are so young yet so good at your work, and that you are in

such pursuit of the truth. Just like that, you established your position in my heart, and the other brothers and sisters also thought quite highly of you. You brought everyone before you and made them think highly of you and worship you. Continuing like this is dangerous; it's the path of antichrists." When I read the letter, I felt terrible. But I only admitted that I was walking the wrong path and didn't seriously reflect on myself at all.

Afterward, I felt a great darkness in my heart. When something befell me, I wouldn't focus on self-reflection, and when I saw something that wasn't to my liking, I couldn't restrain my temper. On all matters, I thought that I was right, and that the brothers and sisters were wrong. For example, when the work I was in charge of yielded poor results, I didn't reflect on whether I had done real work, but instead placed the responsibility on my brothers and sisters, saying that it was the brothers' and sisters' poor caliber that led to this lack of results. The people that I chose were also not suitable, and the sister I was paired with reminded me to choose people according to the principles. I opposed and did not accept this in my heart. I was negative and hostile, saying that I had poor work capability and couldn't do real work. When Sister Yang Ting and I reviewed the gospel work, I saw that there had been no improvement, and for no reason, I chided her, saying that she had no burden to bear and didn't do real work. This affected Yang Ting quite a lot. I became aware that I was in a bad state. In all these matters that befell me, not once did I try to know myself, and I also acted without principles. What I brought the brothers and sisters was nothing but constraint and harm. Thinking of this, I was terrified. I pursued fame and status, and often exalted and testified to myself. When something befell me, I didn't accept the truth and brought no benefits to anyone. Before long, I was dismissed. At this time, I had the feeling that disaster was imminent. In my heart, I knew very well that God's judgment

and chastisement had come upon me. I felt very bad and regretted that I had not repented in time. I silently prayed to God in my heart, “God! I exalted and testified to myself while doing my duty, and I was dismissed. I know that this is Your way of loving and protecting me. God! Please enlighten me, guide me, and help me truly know myself.”

After this, I reflected on and tried to know myself based on the issues that the brothers and sisters pointed out, and in a devotional, I read these words of God: **“Exalting and testifying about themselves, flaunting themselves, trying to make people think highly of them and worship them—corrupt mankind is capable of these things. This is how people instinctively react when they are governed by their satanic natures, and it is common to all of corrupt mankind. How do people usually exalt and testify about themselves? How do they achieve the aim of making people think highly of them and worship them? They testify to how much work they have done, how much they have suffered, how much they have expended themselves, and what price they have paid. They exalt themselves by talking about their capital, which gives them a higher, firmer, more secure place in people’s minds, so that more people appreciate, think highly of, admire, and even worship, look up to, and follow them. To achieve this aim, people do many things that testify to God on the surface, but essentially exalt and testify about themselves. Is acting that way reasonable? They are beyond the purview of rationality and have no shame, that is, they unabashedly testify to what they have done for God and how much they have suffered for Him. They even flaunt their gifts, talents, experience, special skills, their clever techniques for worldly dealings, the means they use to toy with people, and so on. Their method of exalting and testifying about themselves is to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also camouflage and**

package themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deficiencies from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the work of the church in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying about themselves? Is exalting and testifying about oneself something someone with conscience and reason does? It is not. So when people do this, what disposition is usually revealed? Arrogance. This is one of the chief dispositions revealed, followed by deceitfulness, which involves doing everything possible to make other people hold them in high esteem. Their words are completely watertight and clearly contain motivations and schemes, they are showing themselves off, yet they want to hide this fact. The outcome of what they say is that people are made to feel that they are better than others, that no one is their equal, that everyone else is inferior to them. And is this outcome not achieved via underhanded means? What disposition is behind such means? And are there any elements of wickedness? (There are.) This is a kind of wicked disposition. It can be seen that these means they employ are directed by a deceitful disposition—so why do I say it is wicked? What connection does this have to wickedness? What do you think: Can they be open about their aims in exalting and testifying about themselves? They can't. But there

is always a desire in the depths of their hearts, and what they say and do is in aid of that desire, and the aims and motivations of what they say and do are kept very secret. They will, for example, employ misdirection or some shady tactics to achieve these aims. Is such secretiveness not devious in nature? Can such deviousness not be called wicked? (Yes.) It can indeed be called wicked, and it runs deeper than deceitfulness” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). God’s words hit the nail on the head and exposed our intentions and aims in exalting and testifying to ourselves. It is all to get people to think highly of us and worship us, and to have a place in their hearts. Thinking back, my exalting and showing myself off was so that people would think highly of and look up to me. When I saw that my articles were made into videos and uploaded online, I wasn’t testifying to the results that God had achieved from working on me, but instead was using them as capital to flaunt myself and get others to think highly of me. During that gathering, when I heard that Xiaoxiao’s state was similar to my experience, I didn’t fellowship about my knowledge of God’s words based on my own experience to help her understand the truth and try to know her own corrupt disposition, but instead I flaunted myself and intentionally analyzed my article in great detail so that I could better show my brothers and sisters that I was of good caliber, had life entry, and was someone who pursued the truth. Then, they would think highly of me and worship me. Especially when Sister Yi Ran asked me how I did my work, I didn’t fellowship about how to master the principles of working, but instead went on and on about how good I was at arranging work so that everyone would think I had work capability and then think highly of and worship me. When I went to the other group to gather, it was the same. When I fellowshiped, I made a point of talking about the gospel work that had gotten good results

to show off that I was good at work, so that the brothers and sisters would know that I was not ordinary, so that I could leave a good impression on them. Actually, when I first started doing my duty, there were many things I didn't understand, and I experienced many failures. It was the guidance of God's words and the fellowship and aid of my brothers and sisters that enabled me to grasp some principles. But I didn't talk about my corruptions or what I was lacking, and specifically displayed my brightest and shiniest side in order to show the brothers and sisters that I was of good caliber, that I pursued the truth, that I had work capability, that I was talented, and that everyone should see me in a new light. My intentions in fellowshipping during gatherings were to show myself off, to show people that I knew how to experience and to work, so that they would think highly of and look up to me. I was testifying to myself, showing myself off, and misleading others. In fellowshipping with my brothers and sisters with such intentions, I was truly so despicable and wicked! I thought of what was said in the ten administrative decrees that God's chosen people must abide by: **"1. Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). And God says: **"Everyone who walks the path of antichrists exalts and bears testimony for themselves, promotes themselves and shows themselves off at every turn, and doesn't care about God at all. Have you experienced these things that I'm talking about? Many people persistently testify for themselves, talking about how they suffer this and that, how they work, how God values them, and entrusts to them some such work, and what they are like, deliberately using particular tones while speaking, and affecting certain manners, until eventually some people will probably begin to think that they are God. The Holy**

Spirit has long since abandoned those who reach this degree, and while they have not yet been cleared out or expelled, and are left instead to render service, their fate is already sealed and they are just awaiting their punishment” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). After reading God’s words, I felt that His righteous disposition must not be offended. What God detests most is people exalting and showing themselves off, and people who do so can easily lose the work of the Holy Spirit. I thought back to how all this time, in order for people to think highly of me, I was eager to let people know that I wrote a few articles of experiential testimony. I turned the results of the Holy Spirit’s work and guidance into my own great achievement that I propagated everywhere. Whether I was gathering with the brothers and sisters or discussing work, whenever I saw someone, I would seize the opportunity to shamelessly peddle my experience so that the brothers and sisters would see that I am of good caliber, have work capability, and am someone who is pursuing the truth, resulting in them thinking highly of and worshiping me. I was brazenly showing myself off and drawing in the hearts of others. This was an offense to God’s disposition. During that time, I lost the work of the Holy Spirit, fell into darkness, and ultimately was dismissed, and this was God’s righteous disposition coming upon me. God detested what I did so much, and He hid His face from me. God is righteous and holy, and His disposition must not be offended, but I had no sense of shame, and I brazenly stole God’s glory. I gave myself credit for the results of God’s work and bragged about my strengths. I truly did not have a God-fearing heart at all, and I was walking the path of antichrists. I was doing evil. Thinking up to this point, my heart spasmed with pain. Even though I had satisfied my desire for status by exalting and testifying to myself, what I got in exchange was God’s loathing and losing the work of the Holy

Spirit. If I continued like this, I would lose my chance to attain salvation. My dismissal was a warning from God. I had to properly reflect on myself and repent.

I pondered, “Why was I able to exalt and testify to myself and step onto this wrong path? Which corrupt disposition was controlling me?” I prayed to God and asked Him to enlighten and guide me. In a devotional, I read these words of God: **“If you have an arrogant and conceited disposition, then being told not to oppose God makes no difference, you can’t help yourself, it is beyond your control. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display; they would make you scorn others, they would leave no one in your heart but yourself; they would rob you of God’s place in your heart, and ultimately cause you to sit in the place of God and demand that people submit to you, and make you venerate your own thoughts, ideas, and notions as the truth. So much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). **“People with an arrogant nature are capable of rebelling against God, resisting Him, committing acts which pass judgment on Him and betray Him, and doing things that exalt themselves and that are an attempt to establish their own independent kingdoms. Say there were several tens of thousands of people in a country that accepted God’s work, and God’s house sent you there to lead and shepherd God’s chosen ones. And say God’s house handed authority over to you and allowed you to work by yourself, without oversight by Me or**

anyone else. After several months, you would have become like a sovereign ruler, all power would be in your hands, you'd call the shots, all the chosen ones would revere you, worship you, submit to you as if you were God, singing your praises with every word, saying you preach insightfully, and persistently claiming that your utterances were what they needed, that you could provide for them and lead them, and their hearts would have no place for God. Would this kind of work not be problematic? How would you have done it? For these people to be capable of such a reaction would prove that the work you were doing did not involve bearing testimony to God at all; rather, it only bore testimony to yourself and showed yourself off. How could you achieve such a consequence? Some people say, 'What I fellowship is the truth; I've certainly never testified to myself!' That attitude of yours—that manner—is one of trying to fellowship to people from God's position, and it is not one of standing in the position of a corrupt human. Everything you say is bombastic talk and making demands of others; it has nothing at all to do with yourself. Therefore, the consequence you would achieve is to get people to worship you and envy you until, in the end, they all submit to you, testify to you, exalt you, and flatter you to high heaven. When that happens, you will be finished; you will have failed! Is this not the path you are all on right now? If you are asked to lead a few thousand or a few tens of thousands of people, you would feel elated. You would then give rise to arrogance and start trying to occupy God's position, speaking and gesticulating, and you would not know what to wear, what to eat, or how to walk. You would revel in life's comforts and hold yourself aloft, not deigning to meet with ordinary brothers and sisters. You would become utterly degenerate—and would be revealed and eliminated, struck down like the archangel.

You are all capable of this, are you not? So, what should you do? If, one day, arrangements were made for you to be responsible for the work of the gospel in every country, and you were capable of walking the path of an antichrist, then how could the work be expanded? Would this not be troublesome? Who, then, would dare to let you go out there? After being sent there, you would never return; you would pay no attention to anything God said, and you would just keep on showing off and bearing testimony to yourself, as if you were bringing people salvation, doing God's work, and making people feel as though God had appeared and was here working—and as people worshiped you, you would be overjoyed, and you would even acquiesce if they treated you like God. Once you reached that stage, you would be done for; you would be scrapped. Without your realizing it, this kind of arrogant nature would end up being your ruin. This is an example of a person who walks the path of antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the

Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is at the Root of Man's Resistance to God). From God's words, I understood that when exalting and testifying to myself, I was under the control of an arrogant nature. Because three of my articles were made into videos and uploaded online, I held myself in very high regard, and thought that I was someone who had the truth reality and would be saved. I also praised myself for being able to resolve the brothers' and sisters' problems and being the most suitable leader. Whether the brothers and sisters were discussing their states, or whether we were talking about work, I used every opportunity to show them my experiential testimony articles and analyze how I gained knowledge and experience, so that they would see that I had the truth reality and think highly of and worship me. I was so arrogant that I lost all reason and didn't know who on earth I was. Every person with a bit of reason and a bit of a God-fearing heart will give all the

glory to God when they see the results achieved by His work. But meanwhile, I didn't have any reason at all. I wrote several articles of experiential testimony and thought that I had the truth reality, and thus, I started to testify to myself. I truly had no sense of shame. I thought of Paul, whose nature was extremely arrogant and conceited. He thought he understood more than others and was above the crowd of apostles. He never dissected or tried to know himself, nor did he accept God's judgment and chastisement. When Paul saw some results in his work, he would flaunt himself everywhere, showing that he was good at working and preaching. He would testify about how much suffering he endured and how great a price he paid, and he misled quite a few believers. He got people to falsely believe that he had the truth reality, and to treat his words as the words of God. Ultimately, he offended God's disposition and was met with God's punishment. The disposition I had revealed was no different than Paul's. I was also extremely arrogant and conceited. I wrote several articles of experiential testimony and paraded myself as someone with the truth reality. I always used these articles to show off, which led to the brothers and sisters worshiping me. I was misleading people just like Paul was. Only God is the truth, and only God's words can resolve people's states and difficulties. And only God's words are fit to be spread to everyone. Only God is worthy of people's worship and admiration. I am a mere corrupt human, but I was always pursuing getting people to think highly of and worship me. I was walking the path of resisting God. If I did not repent, I would offend His disposition and be punished. Inside, I was trembling with fear; it was as if God's fury could be unleashed upon me at any time. In my heart, I constantly said to God, "God! I was wrong. I am no more than a corrupt human. My disposition is arrogant, I stole Your glory, and I lost the work of the Holy Spirit. This is Your righteousness. I am too unreasonable,

and I should truly be punished. God! I am so afraid that You'll abandon me, and I'm willing to come before You and repent.”

Later, I was also self-reflecting, and I realized I always thought that writing articles of experiential testimony meant that I had the truth reality and that I was great. Did such a view align with the truth? I read God's words and found an answer to this question. God says: **“People's lives progress very slowly, because the truth that people understand involves people's nature essence, people's existence, and the things that people live by, and this involves the transformation of one's disposition as well as changes in one's life. How can it be so easy for your life to change into another life? In one respect, it requires God's work, and at the same time, it also needs people to actively cooperate; on top of that, there are the trials of the external environment, as well as your personal pursuit; in addition, you must have sufficient caliber and perceptiveness, and God will then give you additional enlightenment and guidance; what's more, God will mete out some chastisements, judgments, and prunings to you, and your brothers and sisters will criticize you, and still you must pursue upward, so that those things which belong to Satan can be eliminated—only then can the positive things that belong to the truth enter in little by little. ... Don't think that since you have listened to a lot of sermons, the truth has become your life, and you have obtained the truth. You are still far from that! Don't think that just because you have written a testimony article or had that kind of experience, you are already saved. You are not there yet! That is just a small fragment in your long life experience. This fragment may be just a momentary mood, a momentary feeling, a momentary wish or ambition, and nothing more. When one day you are weak and you look back and listen to the testimonies you once gave,**

the oaths you once made, and the understandings you once came to, they will feel unfamiliar to you, and you will say, ‘Was that me? Did I have such great stature? How come I don’t know? That wasn’t me, surely?’ At this point you will realize that your life still hasn’t changed. What does it indicate if your life hasn’t changed? It is that your disposition still hasn’t transformed. How will you feel when you discover that—despite having given testimonies and having thought at the time that you were already of great stature—you can still become as negative as you are now? Would you not think that transforming one’s disposition is too hard? The truth is not something that can be wrought into people overnight. If people really gain the truth as their life, they will be blessed, and their lives will be different. They will no longer be like they are now, often revealing corrupt dispositions, but will be able to submit absolutely to God and do their duty loyally, and they will be completely transformed” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)).

“Most people’s experiential testimony articles are about experiencing an environment that forced them to act in a certain way and achieving ‘submission to God’ in their actions. They feel quite pleased with themselves, thinking they have the truth reality. Although you wrote a testimony article, it is actually about boasting, testifying for yourself, and establishing yourself: ‘Look, I have a testimony. I didn’t let God down. I held fast to my duty in this environment!’ Some others, after being pruned, have reflected and realized that they were perfunctory and didn’t satisfy God, and are willing to repent. Even though there is a period of showing repentance, where it seems they are no longer being perfunctory, has their corrupt disposition changed? No; behind the scenes, they are still so arrogant and presumptuous. The standpoint, perspective, and viewpoints from which they view and deal with people

and things are fundamentally not based on God's words, so their corrupt disposition has not begun to change at all! So, what is the change you speak of? It is merely a change in behavior, lifestyle, and perhaps the tone, manner of expression, and style in which you interact with others and handle matters. Your faith has also strengthened; you are able to seek the truth after undergoing many instances of being pruned in various environments, and now understand many truths, and your resolve to follow God is firmer than before—these aspects have all changed. These changes make people more confident in gaining salvation, more willing to pursue the truth, and more hopeful and optimistic about following God. Whatever trials or tribulations come their way, they do not become negative and abandon their faith. However, these are merely changes in the outward expression of normal humanity. These more positive and proactive thoughts and perspectives gradually occupy people's hearts. These changes are signs that their hearts are being awakened and revitalized. That is, people become more proactive and have a greater aspiration for positive things, becoming more confident in pursuing God's words, His work, and His requirements. Naturally, they also have a clearer concept about the most important work God is doing—the work of saving people. Based on these conditions, many people do their duties more securely, compliantly, and obediently than before. The efficiency of their duties improves, particularly in technical work, which progresses faster now. They are not as sluggish as they were before, when tasks that should take a few days would drag on for a week or more—now there are results in just a few days. Of course, this is good news. But what is the bad news? It is that the changes you reveal and exhibit are merely in behavior, thought, and ideology, with some signs of relatively positive,

proactive, optimistic elements in your subconscious being awakened. However, these signs do not mean that your corrupt disposition has begun to change” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). After reading God’s words, I was very humiliated and ashamed. In the past, I thought if I wrote several articles of experiential testimony that were made into videos and uploaded online, I would have the truth reality and be better than others, and even not be far off from salvation. According to God’s words, my view was fallacious and not aligned with the truth. Even though I was self-reflective and had knowledge on one matter, and so I wrote an article of experiential testimony, this only meant that I had gained some rewards and knowledge at this stage, not that I had cast off my corrupt disposition and was someone with the reality and with life. In fact, I had been deeply corrupted by Satan; satanic dispositions were deeply ingrained in me, and I also had many satanic poisons inside me. It was not that case at all that if I understood a bit of the truth or could practice the truth once in regard to a certain matter, my satanic dispositions would then be able to change completely. During this time, I lived in my arrogant disposition, thinking that I was superior to and better than everyone and shamelessly exalting and showing myself off, also blindly chiding the brothers and sisters with my arrogant disposition and hot-headedness. I still had many corrupt dispositions that I hadn’t resolved, and I absolutely did not have God’s words as my life. I also recognized that the articles of experiential testimony I wrote only meant that I had some understanding of a certain aspect of my corrupt dispositions or incorrect views and was temporarily able to put a bit of the truth into practice, but I had not come to thoroughly hate and rebel against my own nature essence. When faced with a similar matter, I would still be bound by my corrupt dispositions and sometimes be unable to put the truth into practice. Just like before, when I wrote about my

experience as a people pleaser and recognized that I was controlled by the idea “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings,” and that I was selfish and despicable, safeguarding my own interests. Through reading God’s words, I became a bit more discerning toward such a viewpoint, but afterward, when faced with the same kind of matter, I was still controlled by my selfish, deceitful nature and could not completely practice the truth. I still needed to accept more of the judgment and chastisement of God’s words and gradually cast off my corrupt disposition. People with true dispositional change and the truth reality view things based on God’s words no matter what befalls them, and do not live according to their satanic corrupt disposition and satanic viewpoints. They can stand firm in their position as created beings, bear witness for God, and live out normal human likeness. But I was still often governed by my corrupt dispositions, and what I lived out did not contain any components of bearing witness for God. I was also brazenly exalting and testifying to myself and living in Satan’s image. I was humiliating God; what truth reality did I have? I was so far from being saved. Only at this time did I clearly see my real stature: I was a corrupt human, fundamentally unworthy of being thought highly of and praised by others. When I had some results in doing my duty, it was achieved by God’s words and work and the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit. If it were not for God’s enlightenment and guidance, then I would be an utter fool who understood nothing, amounted to nothing, and was not better than others. Recognizing this, I was a bit disgusted with myself. I still had so many corruptions and lacked so much, yet I did not know myself at all and still thought that I had the truth reality. I was so arrogant and without reason, and God truly detested me.

More than a month later, I was assigned to do my duty once again. I was very afraid that I would repeat the same mistakes, and I often prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to practice the truth. One time, I was gathering with some leaders, and I heard Zhang Ying mention that she noticed the brothers' and sisters' problems but didn't dare to instruct them, and I thought that this was a manifestation of people pleasers. I thought to myself, "There are quite a few people here; why don't I show them my article of experiential testimony about this? This way, they will certainly think highly of me, and just like that, I will establish my image among the brothers and sisters." At this time, I recognized that once again, I wanted to show myself off. I thought of God's words: **"To prevent making the same old mistakes, people must first be aware that they have yet to obtain the truth, that there has not been a change in their life disposition, and that although they believe in God, they still live under the power of Satan, and have not been saved; they are liable to betray God and stray from God at any time. If they have this sense of crisis in their hearts—if, as people often say, they are prepared for danger in times of peace—then they will be able to hold themselves in check somewhat, and when something does happen to them, they will pray to God and depend on Him, and will be able to avoid making the same old mistakes. ... There are three most important points to keep in mind: First, you still don't know God; second, there have not been any changes in your disposition; and third, you have yet to live out the true image of man. These three things are in line with the facts, they are real, and you must be clear about them. You must be self-aware. If you have the will to fix this problem, then you should choose your own motto: For example, 'I am the dung upon the ground,' or 'I am the devil,' or 'I often fall into my old ways,' or 'I'm always in danger.' Any one of these is fit to serve**

as your personal motto, and it will help if you remind yourself of it at all times. Keep repeating it to yourself, reflect on it, and you may well be able to make fewer mistakes, or stop making mistakes. Nevertheless, what is most important is to spend more time reading God's words, to understand the truth, to know your own nature, and to cast off your corrupt disposition. Only then will you be safe. Another thing is to never take the position of 'a witness of God,' and never call yourself a witness of God. You can only speak of personal experience. You may speak about how God saved you, fellowship about how you were conquered by God, and talk about what grace He bestowed upon you. Never forget that you are the most deeply corrupted of people; you are manure and garbage. Being able to accept God's work of the last days now is entirely thanks to Him uplifting you. It is only because you are the most corrupt and filthy that you have been saved by God incarnate, that He has granted you such tremendous grace. You therefore have nothing worth bragging about, and can only praise and thank God. Your salvation is purely due to God's grace" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). In my heart, I knew clearly that I couldn't continue to pursue getting people to think highly of me; I had to let go of this incorrect intention. God is the source of the truth, and I had to fellowship and bear witness to God's words more with my brothers and sisters and help them learn how to self-reflect and know themselves through God's words and find the path to practice. I also thought of my failure during this period of time and realized that I couldn't continue to show myself off like I did in the past, so in my heart, I prayed to God, "God! I know that my intentions are incorrect, and once again I want to show myself off and pursue getting people to think highly of me. God! I am willing to let go of my inner intentions and desires; I don't

want to walk the path of failure any longer. I only want to do my duty well; please guide me to practice the truth.” After praying, I calmed myself down and heard about the specifics of Zhang Ying’s problem, and thought about which aspect of the truth I should fellowship in order to achieve results. Only when I listened closely did I find out that her state and views were different than my own experience. Afterward, I found some of God’s words that were directed at Zhang Ying’s state and fellowshipped on them, and also pointed out Zhang Ying’s problems according to God’s words. After fellowshipping, Zhang Ying gained some knowledge regarding her state and was willing to practice according to God’s words and safeguard the church’s interests. Seeing that she was able to do some self-reflecting and gain some knowledge, I felt very happy. I had experienced firsthand the peace of mind that comes from practicing according to God’s words. At a gathering, I opened up and talked to my brothers and sisters about my past experience of failure, dissecting myself and fellowshipping on knowledge of my corrupt disposition, and I testified that the judgment and exposing of God’s words made me gain some knowledge about my arrogant nature. And I also recognized that no matter whether we are discussing our experience or resolving the difficulties and problems of brothers and sisters, we must dissect ourselves more, better understand our own corruption and lacking, bear more witness to God’s words and His work and guidance. Only then can we exalt and testify to God.

After being dismissed that time, I learned that this was God saving me. My nature was so arrogant, and even though I knew I was revealing a corrupt disposition, I still involuntarily exalted and testified to myself. Even though I knew that I was walking the path of antichrists, I did not turn around. Being dismissed stopped my evil deeds, made me deeply reflect on and try to know myself, and made me willing to repent and change. I thank

God for giving me this valuable opportunity to experience His work, enabling me to bow my head, reflect on and try to know myself, and find the path to practice. I know how I ought to exalt and testify to God in the performance of my duty.

18. Holding Fast to My Duty in a Dangerous Situation

By Li Fang, China

One day in July of 2023, after I returned from a gathering, a sister rushed over to me and told me that a general affairs deacon named Qiu Ling and a church leader had been arrested. She also urged me to be extremely careful whenever I went out for gatherings. I was quite startled and thought, “I gather with Qiu Ling all the time and often go to her home. Have the police already taken notice of me? Two years ago, I was reported for believing in God and the police took a video of me at the time. If I’m arrested again, that will be a repeat offense, and if they don’t kill me, they’ll be sure to leave me badly injured.” Not soon after that, another church leader came and said she would be handling the aftermath. She asked me to water and support the newcomers so that they would be able to stand firm in the face of persecution and hardship. When she gave me that assignment, I felt a sudden sense of panic and thought, “With things as dangerous as they are, isn’t she sending me into the line of fire?” Images of the brothers and sisters suffering all manner of torture played one after the other in my mind. I began to worry, thinking, “The police have a video of me. As soon as they get a hold of me, they certainly won’t take it easy on me. If I can’t take the torture and become a Judas, not only will I not attain salvation, I will also descend to hell to be punished. Everything I’ve done in my faith these years, forsaking family, abandoning my career, expending myself, undergoing suffering, paying a price—won’t it all have been in vain?” Realizing all this, I just wanted to hide away in my host house and refrain from going out. It seemed to me that this would be a safer way to go about things. However, I then realized that this way of thinking was wrong:

Wouldn't it be selfish of me to be timid, fearful and only protect my own interests at such a critical moment? The leader was risking danger to handle the aftermath—if she were like me, shrinking back at the slightest sign of danger, who would handle the aftermath? Realizing this, despite feeling timid and afraid, I still accepted the assignment.

Around noon of the next day, I heard that a host sister and her younger sister were arrested by the police. I thought to myself, “I was just in a gathering with them not too long ago and now they’ve been arrested. If I go out, won’t I be arrested too?” I felt very conflicted: If I went out, I could be arrested, but if I stayed in, the other brothers and sisters wouldn’t hear about the arrests of these two sisters. If I didn’t let them know right away, they would also be in danger of being arrested. Realizing this, I decided to go inform them of what had happened, ask them to temporarily suspend gatherings and hide all their books of God’s words. After I got back, I thought, “I absolutely cannot go out again. It’s just too dangerous!” To my surprise, that day around early evening, Brother Wang Bin came to me and told me that the leaders had originally arranged a gathering at his house to go over work, but his wife was just arrested and he escaped by jumping over a wall. Brother Wang said that we had to inform the leaders not to go to his house right away. I felt even more afraid and panicked and my legs went limp. I thought, “If the police have been following and monitoring you, as soon as I go out, they’ll be sure to arrest me! Those police are extremely vicious and cruel to God’s chosen people and I’m being targeted by them for arrest. If they arrest me and beat me to death, I’ll never get to see my husband and child again!” But besides Wang Bin, who had just escaped by the skin of his teeth from the police, the only other person available was an elderly sister. That sister was nearly 80 years old and wasn’t particularly mobile. What’s more, it was already dark out, so it was

up to me to pass the letter to the leaders. I hurriedly prayed to God and then recalled a passage of God's words I had read: **"People's disloyalty is manifested in how they always protect themselves, retreating like a turtle into its shell whenever they face anything, and waiting until it passes before sticking their heads back out again. No matter what they meet with, they are always walking on eggshells, have a lot of anxiety, worry, and apprehension, and are unable to stand and defend the work of the church. What is the problem here? Isn't it a lack of faith? You have no real faith in God, you do not believe that God is sovereign over all things, and you do not believe that your life, your everything is in God's hands. You do not believe what God says, 'Without God's permission, Satan does not dare to move a single hair on your body.' You rely on your own eyes and judge the facts, you judge things based on your own calculations, always protecting yourself. ... Why is there no real faith in God? Is it because people's experiences are too shallow and they cannot see through these things, or is it because they understand too little of the truth? What is the reason? Does it have something to do with people's corrupt dispositions? Is it because people are too cunning? (Yes.) No matter how many things they experience, no matter how many facts are placed in front of them, they don't believe that this is the work of God, or that a person's fate is in God's hands. This is one aspect. Another mortal issue is that people care too much about themselves. They are not willing to pay any price or make any sacrifice for God, for His work, for the interests of God's house, for His name, or for His glory. They are not willing to do anything that involves even the slightest danger. People care too much about themselves! Because of their fear of death, of humiliation, of being trapped by evil people, and of falling into any kind of predicament,**

people go to great lengths to preserve their own flesh, striving not to let themselves enter any dangerous situations. In one respect, this behavior shows that people are all too cunning, while in another, it reveals their self-preservation and selfishness” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (19)). The judgment and exposure of God’s words cut to the quick. I felt so ashamed: I was acting in just the way that God described. When there was no danger and everything was going smoothly, I would always say that God holds sovereignty over all things, is in control of everything, man’s fate is in God’s hands, and no matter how difficult the situation, we should do our duty properly and stand firm in witness to God. Now I saw that I was just reciting slogans and that fulfilling my duty and satisfying God were just aspirations of mine. The leaders were in danger of being arrested and Wang Bin asked me to deliver a letter to them—anyone with the slightest bit of humanity would consider the church’s interests and send the letter right away, but I was selfish and deceitful and only considered my own safety. I didn’t want to go because I feared that if I sent the letter, I would be followed and arrested and I worried that if I were arrested, I would be tortured. I saw that I was really selfish and deceitful. In this dangerous moment, I didn’t give the slightest thought to the interests of God’s house or the safety of my brothers and sisters. I clung to life and feared death, and was just doing whatever I needed to survive. I didn’t deserve to be a believer! Realizing this, I stopped hesitating and immediately delivered the letter to the leaders on my scooter. After receiving the letter, the leaders didn’t go to Wang Bin’s house.

The police continued to make arrests and brothers and sisters were apprehended one after another. Most of the brothers and sisters in the church temporarily suspended gathering, but there were still a few newcomers who needed my watering and support. I felt a bit conflicted:

With all the arrests being made, the newcomers might be unable to comprehend God's intentions due to being unable to attend gatherings and might leave the church at any time. But I heard that the police were forcing brothers and sisters who had been arrested to identify brothers and sisters in pictures. They would let anyone go that identified three brothers and sisters. If someone sold me out, I would be in a very dangerous situation. I became a bit timid when I realized this. I then recalled God's words which say: **"What people can achieve, they should do their utmost to accomplish; the rest is up to God to do, to exercise His sovereignty over and orchestrate, and to guide. This is what we worry about the least. We have God behind us. Not only do we have God in our hearts, but we also have genuine faith. This is not a spiritual support; in fact, God is in the dark, and He is at people's side, always present with them. Whenever people do anything or do any duty, He is watching; He is there to help you at any time and place, keeping and protecting you. What people should do is to do their utmost to accomplish what they should. As long as you become aware, feel in your heart, see in God's words, are reminded by people around you, or are given any signal or omen by God that provides you with information—that this is something you should do, that this is God's commission to you—then you should fulfill your responsibility and not sit by idly or watch from the sidelines"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (21)). God's words comforted and motivated me. I felt a sense of faith and knew that this dangerous situation was God's way of testing me. God was scrutinizing my every word and action, and no matter how much I suffered, I had to remain loyal and not be obstructed by any person, event or thing. God was my rock, and no matter how dangerous the environment in the outside world might have been, or how evil and

maniacal the great red dragon was, they were all in God's hands and subject to His orchestrations and sovereignty. The more crucial and dire the situation, the more I must do my duty properly, stand firm in witness to God and humiliate Satan. Having realized this, I put on a disguise and went out right away to water the newcomers.

After that, a string of over ten arrests of brothers and sisters from the church were made and there were no longer any safe host homes for me to reside in. As I walked along the street, I felt pangs of sadness and tears came streaming from my eyes. I thought, "When will this itinerant, peripatetic existence finally come to an end? Some of my brothers and sisters have been arrested, while some have been sold out. No host home is safe now, so where can I go?" I quietly prayed to God and asked Him to open up a way for me. Later on, I recalled this passage of His words: **"You must remember at all times that God is with people, and they need only pray and seek from Him if they have any difficulties, and that with God, nothing is hard. You must have this faith. Since you believe that God is the Sovereign of all things, why do you still feel afraid when something befalls you, and that you have nothing to rely on? This proves that you do not rely on God. If you do not take Him as your support and as your God, then He is not your God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words reminded me that God rules sovereignty over all things and as long as we truly rely on God, He will lead us. Realizing this, I regained some faith. I kept thinking as I walked and suddenly recalled that an old sister's home was still relatively safe and immediately headed there. The sister accepted me unhesitatingly. It was then that I truly got a sense of how God is man's unwavering support and it is up to man to rely upon God to face hardship as it arises.

One day, after watering newcomers, I went to a previous host house to ask some questions. To my surprise, the host sister told me that her house had just been searched and I should leave right away. I hurriedly made off down a small alley. I was worried that I was being followed and my heart was racing. I thought, “The police already have my information. If I fall into their hands this time, they’ll certainly beat me to death!” The more I thought, the more frightened I became, and my heart was in my throat. I continually prayed to God, “Oh God! If I fall into the police’s hands this time, it will be with Your permission. I am willing to submit. Please just give me faith and strength and the will to endure suffering so that I can stand firm in witness to You and humiliate Satan.” After prayer, I recalled these words of God: **“The matter of death has the same nature as other matters. It is not up to people to choose for themselves, much less can it be changed by the will of man. Death is the same as any other important event in life: It is entirely under the predestination and sovereignty of the Creator. If someone were to beg for death, they may not necessarily die; if they were to beg to live, they may not necessarily live. All this is under the sovereignty and predestination of God, and it is changed and decided by the authority of God, by God’s righteous disposition, and by God’s sovereignty and arrangements”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). **“If all you do is shout slogans about what you want to do for God, how you want to fulfill your duty, and how much you want to expend and exert for God, it is useless. When reality hits home for you, when you are asked to sacrifice your life, whether you complain at the very last moment, whether you are willing, and whether you truly submit—this is the test of your stature. If at the moment that your life is about to be taken from you, you are at ease, willing, and submit without complaint, if you feel that**

you have fulfilled your responsibilities, obligations, and duties to the end, if your heart is joyful and at peace—if you go like this, then for God, you have not gone at all. Rather, you are living in another realm and in another form. You have done nothing but change your manner of living. In no way are you truly dead. As man sees it, ‘This person died at such a young age, how pitiful!’ But in the eyes of God, you have not died or gone to suffer. Instead, you have gone to enjoy blessings and come closer to God. Because, as a created being, you are already up to standard in the performance of your duty in God’s eyes, you have now completed your duty, God does not need you to perform this duty any longer among the ranks of created beings. To God, your ‘going’ is not called ‘going,’ you are ‘taken away,’ ‘brought away,’ or ‘led away,’ and it is a good thing” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). Pondering over God’s words I realized that man’s life and death are not up to them to choose. They will not necessarily die just because they want to or survive just because they want to go on living. All is under the sovereignty and predestination of God. I also realized that it makes God happy that created beings are able to spread the gospel of the Creator’s salvation of mankind and fulfill their responsibilities and complete their duties even in an adverse environment in which the great red dragon maniacally arrests Christians. I thought of how saints throughout the ages had sacrificed their precious lives to spread the gospel of the Lord. Some were stoned to death, some were dragged to death by horses—they met with all manner of horrific deaths. People may think their deaths were brutal and tragic, but God sees their deaths as meaningful and valuable. As for me, when faced with a dangerous situation, I was afraid of death, cherished my life and couldn’t understand what death was really about and what the meaning of death was. If I really

did end up in the police's hands one day, betrayed God and became a Judas due to my fear of death, I would be a sinner for all of time and my body, soul, and spirit would be subject to eternal punishment—that would be an actual death. No matter how vicious and evil the great red dragon could be, it can only ravage man's flesh. If I really were arrested and beaten to death by the police, I would have endured persecution for righteousness' sake. Though my flesh perished, my soul would still be in God's hands. Realizing this, I didn't feel so afraid of death.

I then recalled God's words, which say: **“In the period of the expansion of God's management work, everyone who follows God is performing their own duty, and they all have undergone, time and again, the suppression and cruel persecution of the great red dragon. The path of following God is rough and uneven, and it is exceptionally difficult. Anyone who has followed God for more than two or three years will have experienced this for themselves. The duty performed by each person, whether it be a fixed duty or a temporary arrangement, comes from God's sovereignty and arrangements. People may be arrested often, and the work of the church may be disturbed and spoiled, and there may be an evident shortage of people to perform duties, especially those with good caliber and professional expertise, who are in the minority, but because of God's leadership, because of His might and authority, God's house has already emerged from the most difficult times, and all of its work has gotten onto the right track. To man, this seems impossible, but nothing is difficult for God to accomplish”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). Pondering over God's words, I felt extremely clear. No matter how difficult the circumstances, God always used His authority and power to lead people through them one

step at a time. For example, when Moses led the exodus of Israelites, the Red Sea stood before them and an army of soldiers chased them from behind—people believed the Israelites faced certain death in their notions and imaginings—but God did not permit the soldiers to harm the Israelites. He bade Moses to point at the Red Sea with his cane and the waters parted, revealing a path of dry ground that allowed the Israelites to pass across the sea. When the soldiers attempted to cross the sea, the waters covered over the dry earth, drowning the entire army. This shows us God's almightiness, wisdom and miraculous deeds. If I had gone to my sister's house just half an hour earlier, I might have been arrested, but due to God's miraculous protection, I remained safe and sound. Realizing all this, I made a resolution to God that if He permitted me to be apprehended by the police, I was willing to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. If I were beaten to death, this would be undergoing persecution for righteousness' sake and would be meaningful. Having comprehended all this, I felt quite at peace. After making sure that no one was following me, I hurriedly contacted brothers and sisters who were subjected to hidden danger and told them to hide.

Through this personal experience, I came to see that the CCP is a demon that ravages and harms mankind. It arrested brothers and sisters one by one and used all kinds of despicable tactics—threatening them, bribing them with promises, torturing and tormenting them—all to make them betray God and sell each other out. It is accursed and the very embodiment of evil! I hated it from the bottom of my heart and rejected and rebelled against it. What's more, I felt even more resolute in my determination to follow God to the very end. Despite suffering a bit and dealing with fear and panic throughout this experience, going through this helped me recognize my selfish, despicable satanic nature and allowed me to witness

God's almightiness, sovereignty and miraculous deeds. This gave me more faith in God. This is an experience I will never forget and has provided me with precious life experience.

19. My Inferiority Was Eliminated

By Ding Xin, China

I was born into an ordinary farming family. Because I was introverted and didn't like to talk, since childhood, my family and relatives often said I was inarticulate and not as likable as my sister. While working outside, I was not good at interacting with people or pleasing my superiors, so the dirty and tiring work was basically always assigned to me, and my colleagues often mocked me for being slow-witted and not knowing how to adapt to situations. In my heart, I accepted the assessment that I was slow-witted and not sharp, and that I was not good at interacting with people, and so I became even more withdrawn. I often felt sad about my clumsiness in speaking; especially when I saw people who were articulate and quick-witted, I envied them, thinking that such people would be liked wherever they went. After believing in God, I was also very reserved when I first started attending gatherings, worried that my clumsy fellowship would make me a laughingstock among the brothers and sisters, but the brothers and sisters often encouraged me to fellowship more. I saw that the brothers and sisters would simply and openly share their states and problems, and no one would belittle or look down on those who lacked something. This made me feel very liberated. Gradually, I started talking more and more. I really liked this kind of church life.

In February 2023, I became a watering deacon. The sister I was watering, Ruijing, had good caliber. A few times I attended gatherings with her, and I saw that her fellowship was very clear, and her insight into problems was no worse than mine, so when I attended gatherings with Ruijing again, I felt somewhat constrained, thinking that her mind was sharper and her caliber better than mine. I felt that trying to water her was

beyond my capability, so whenever she had any bad states, I would just talk to her about it briefly and then change the subject, worried that my shallow fellowship would make her look down on me. Once, I learned that Ruijing had a serious arrogant disposition and tended to constrain people with her words, so I wanted to point out this issue to her. But thinking that she had good caliber, was articulate, and was effective in her duty, a bit of arrogance seemed normal. Besides, my caliber was poor, and my ability to express myself was not good. If I couldn't fellowship clearly with her and solve her problems, I would be ridiculed by her. So, I just briefly mentioned her arrogance and moved on. Another time, during a gathering, Ruijing talked about her family opposing her belief in God, and that she was somewhat constrained by this. I had had similar experiences and thought I could fellowship with her about it, but as soon as I said a few words, Ruijing said that she was not impacted by her family affections. But the truth was, her emotional constraints were already affecting her duty, and I knew I needed to fellowship with her about it as soon as possible. But hearing her say this, I didn't dare continue the fellowship, I thought, "If I keep fellowshipping, will Ruijing think I'm nagging her and unable to see through things? Better not embarrass myself anymore, Ruijing has good caliber and doesn't need me to fellowship with her. She can seek the truth and solve this herself." So, I didn't continue fellowshipping. But afterward, Ruijing's state didn't improve, and her duty was affected.

After that, every time Ruijing was present at a gathering, I felt very constrained, worried that my poor fellowship would make her look down on me. I felt very tormented and negative, because I couldn't fellowship what I should, and that I couldn't fulfill my responsibilities. I felt like I was living a pathetic life. I kept asking myself, "Why am I living so wearily?" I was even blaming God for not giving me good caliber, wanting to escape this

situation and change my duty. I knew my state was not good, so I prayed to God, “God, I am very constrained in my duty now, I feel very tired and bitter, and I don’t know how to resolve this state. May You enlighten and guide me to know myself and come out of this wrong state.” After praying, I looked for relevant words of God to read. Almighty God says: **“There are some people who, as children, were ordinary-looking, inarticulate, and not very quick-witted, causing others in their families and social environments to give rather unfavorable appraisals of them, saying things like: ‘This kid is dull-witted, slow, and a clumsy speaker. Look at other people’s children, who are so well-spoken that they can wrap people around their little finger. Whereas this kid just pouts all day long. He doesn’t know what to say when meeting people, doesn’t know how to explain or justify himself after doing something wrong, and can’t amuse people. This kid is an idiot.’ The parents say this, relatives and friends say this, and their teachers also say this. This environment exerts a certain, invisible pressure on such individuals. Through experiencing these environments, they unconsciously develop a certain kind of mindset. What kind of mindset? They think that they are not good-looking, not very likable, and that others are never happy to see them. They believe that they are not good at studying, are slow, and always feel embarrassed to open their mouths and speak in front of others. They are too embarrassed to say thank you when people give them something, thinking to themselves, ‘Why am I always so tongue-tied? Why are other people such smooth talkers? I’m just stupid!’ Subconsciously, they think they are worthless, but still are unwilling to acknowledge being that worthless, being that stupid. In their hearts they always ask themselves, ‘Am I really that stupid? Am I really that unpleasant?’ Their parents do not like them, and neither do their**

brothers and sisters, their teachers or their classmates. And occasionally their family members, their relatives and friends say of them, 'He is short, his eyes and nose are small, and with looks like that, he will not be successful when he grows up.' So, when they look in the mirror, they see that their eyes are indeed small. In this situation, the resistance, dissatisfaction, unwillingness, and unacceptance in the depths of their heart turn gradually to acceptance and acknowledgment of their own shortcomings, deficiencies, and issues. Although they can accept this reality, a persistent emotion arises in the depths of their heart. What is this emotion called? It is inferiority. People who feel inferior do not know what their strengths are. They just think that they are unlikable, always feel stupid, and do not know how to deal with things. In short, they feel they cannot do anything, are unattractive, are not clever, and have slow reactions. They are unremarkable compared to others and do not get good grades in their studies. After growing up in such an environment, this mindset of inferiority gradually takes over. It turns into a kind of lingering emotion that becomes tangled with your heart and fills your mind. Regardless of whether you are already grown, have gone out into the world, are married and established in your career, and regardless of your social status, this feeling of inferiority that was planted in your environment growing up is impossible to get rid of. Even after you start believing in God and join the church, you still think that you have average looks, have poor intellectual caliber, are inarticulate, and cannot do anything. You think, 'I'll just do what I can. I don't need to aspire to be a leader, I don't need to pursue profound truths, I'll just be content with being the least significant one, and let others treat me however they like.' ... This feeling of inferiority is perhaps not inborn

in you, but on another level, because of your family environment and the environment you grew up in, you were subjected to moderate blows or improper judgments, and this caused the feeling of inferiority to arise in you” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). From God’s words, I understood that the reason I often lived in repression and despondency was mainly because I lived in negative feelings of inferiority. Since childhood, I had not been good at talking; whether at home or when working outside, my relatives and colleagues all said I was inarticulate and unable to please people, so I felt that I was clumsy in speech, not sharp-minded, and inferior to others in every way. Gradually, I felt more and more inferior. After believing in God, it was the same. Especially when I saw brothers and sisters who were better than me, I felt inferior, often living in negative emotions. When interacting with Ruijing, I saw that Ruijing was quick-witted and eloquent, and I felt that my ability to express myself and my caliber were inferior to hers, so when gathering with her, I felt constrained and unable to feel liberated. Even when I saw her in a bad state, I didn’t dare to fellowship with her. I was always living in negative feelings of inferiority. I was well aware that in God’s house there is no distinction between high and low, yet I couldn’t help but look up to people with gifts and good caliber, and I was unable to correctly view my own shortcomings. This often constrained me in my duty, preventing me from gaining the Holy Spirit’s work and guidance. I knew it was dangerous to continue this way and wanted to quickly reverse this state.

I read more of God’s words: **“No matter what happens to them, when cowardly people meet with some difficulty, they shrink back. Why do they do this? One reason is that this is caused by their feeling of inferiority. Because they feel inferior, they do not dare to go before people, they cannot even take on the obligations and responsibilities**

they ought to take on, nor can they take on what they are actually capable of achieving within the scope of their own ability and caliber, and within the scope of the experience of their own humanity. This feeling of inferiority affects every aspect of their humanity, it affects their personality and, of course, it also affects their character. ... Your heart is filled with this feeling of inferiority and this feeling has been around for a long time, it is not some temporary feeling. Rather, it tightly controls your thoughts from deep inside your soul, it tightly seals your lips, and so regardless of how correctly you understand things, or what views and opinions you have toward people, events and things, you dare only to think and turn things over in your own heart, never daring to speak out loud. Whether other people might approve of what you say, or correct and criticize you, you will not dare to face or see such an outcome. Why is this? It is because your feeling of inferiority is inside you, telling you, ‘Don’t do that, you’re just not up to it. You don’t have that kind of caliber, you don’t have that kind of reality, you shouldn’t do that, that’s just not you. Don’t do anything or think anything now. You’ll only be the real you by living in inferiority. You’re not qualified to pursue the truth or to open up your heart and say what you want and connect with others like other people do. And it’s because you’re no good, you’re not as good as they are.’ This feeling of inferiority guides people’s thinking inside their minds; it inhibits them from fulfilling the obligations a normal person should perform and from living the life of normal humanity they should be living, while it also directs the ways and means, and the direction and goals of how they regard people and things, how they comport themselves and act”

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). From God’s words, I saw that when people live in feelings of inferiority, their views on

people and things, as well as their comportment and actions, are not based on God's words, they fail to fulfill their responsibilities, and their inherent caliber cannot be utilized. Continuing this way not only hinders their own life entry, but in serious cases, it can also impact their duty and hinder the church's work. Thinking back, I accepted external evaluations of me since childhood, and lived in feelings of inferiority. I always felt inferior to others, not daring to point out or discuss problems when I saw them. When interacting with Ruijing, I saw her serious arrogant disposition, and that her words and actions constrained the brothers and sisters, so I should have fellowshiped with her and pointed this out, but I felt that my caliber was not as good as hers, which made me hesitant to fellowship with her as I felt it was presumptuous. I saw her performance of her duty was being affected by her affections, and though I had some experience in this area, I felt that my caliber was poor, so I didn't dare to fellowship. I saw that I was completely controlled by feelings of inferiority, my mouth felt sealed, unable to say what needed to be said. I looked on as Ruijing lived in a corrupt disposition and didn't dare to fellowship with her, unable to fulfill my duty to protect the church's work. I lived in a tormented and negative state, unable to gain any release. This was really harmful to both others and myself! I read God's words: **"This emotion of yours is not only negative, to be more accurate, it is actually in opposition to God and the truth. You might think that this is an emotion within normal humanity, but in God's eyes, this is not just a simple matter of emotion, but a method of opposition to God. It is a method marked by negative emotions that people use to resist God, God's words and the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). Reflecting on my journey so far, as I'd often lived in feelings of inferiority, I'd known the truth but not practiced it, even blaming God for not giving me good caliber. I'd been

negative and passive in my duty, and even wanted to give up on it. These behaviors were a form of passive resistance against God. I felt that I was in great danger, and became willing to rely on God to let go of my negative emotions and find a path of practice and entry.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"So, how can you accurately evaluate and know yourself, and break away from the feeling of inferiority? You should take God's words as the basis for gaining knowledge of yourself, learning what your humanity, caliber, and talent are like, and what strengths you have. For example, suppose that you used to like singing and did it well, but some people kept criticizing you and belittling you, saying that you were tone-deaf and that your singing was out of tune, so now you feel that you cannot sing well and no longer dare to do it in front of others. Because those worldly folks, those muddleheaded people and mediocre people, made inaccurate evaluations and judgments about you, the rights that your humanity deserves were curtailed, and your talent was stifled. As a result, you do not dare to even sing a song, and you are only brave enough to let go and sing out loud when no one is around or you are just by yourself. Because you ordinarily feel so horribly repressed, when you are not alone you dare not sing a song; you dare to sing only when you are alone, enjoying the time when you can sing out loud and clear, and what a wonderful, liberating time that is! Is that not so? Because of the harm that people have done to you, you do not know or cannot see clearly what it is that you can actually do, what you are good at, and what you are not good at. In this kind of situation, you must make a correct evaluation and take the correct measure of yourself according to God's words. You should establish what you have learned and where your strengths lie, and go out and do whatever it is that you can do; as**

for those things which you cannot do, your shortcomings and deficiencies, you should reflect on and know them, and you should also accurately evaluate and know what your caliber is like, and whether it is good or bad” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)).

After reading God’s words, I understood that to get rid of negative feelings of inferiority, I must first evaluate and measure myself correctly based on God’s words. God’s words are the truth, and using them to measure people, events, and things is the most accurate. Previously, I had measured myself based on nonbelievers’ evaluations of me, which led me to live in dark and despondent emotions, unable to extricate myself. Now I needed to seek the truth and correctly view myself based on God’s words. So I asked myself, “I always feel that my caliber is poor. Then, what is God’s standard for evaluating poor and good caliber?” I read God’s words: **“How do we measure people’s caliber? The appropriate way to do this is by looking at their attitude toward the truth and whether or not they can comprehend the truth. Some people can learn some specializations very quickly, but when they hear the truth, they become confused and they doze off. In their hearts, they become muddled, nothing they hear goes in, nor do they understand what they are hearing—that is what poor caliber is. With some people, when you tell them they are of poor caliber, they disagree. They think that being highly educated and knowledgeable means they are of good caliber. Does a good education demonstrate high caliber? It does not. How should people’s caliber be measured? It should be measured based on the degree to which they comprehend God’s words and the truth. This is the most accurate way of doing it. Some people are silver-tongued, quick-witted, and especially skilled at handling other people—but when they listen to sermons, they are never able to understand anything, and when they read God’s**

words, they do not comprehend them. When they talk about their experiential testimony, they always speak words and doctrines, revealing themselves to be mere amateurs, and giving others the sense that they have no spiritual understanding. These are people of poor caliber” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Fulfill One’s Duty Well, Understanding the Truth Is Most Crucial). God’s words tell us that the standard for measuring the caliber of a person is based on how well a person comprehends God’s words. Some people may appear to have many gifts, be quick-witted, and have good speaking skills, but if they cannot comprehend God’s words or understand the truth fellowshiped by God, then such people are of poor caliber. While some people may have average education and no particularly good speaking skills, if they can understand God’s intentions from His words and find the principles of practice, then these people are of good caliber. Take Paul, for example. Although he had gifts, knowledge, eloquence, and he spread the gospel across most of Europe, he did not understand God’s words when he heard them, and in the end, he did not know the Lord Jesus, and never acknowledged his essence of resistance to Jesus. His diligent work was for the sake of gaining a crown and rewards, and he even arrogantly claimed that, to him, to live was christ. This showed that Paul could not truly comprehend God’s words or understand the truth. Paul was a person of poor caliber. In contrast, Peter was able to fathom God’s intentions from His words and find a path of practice. He could accurately practice according to God’s requirements, and he bore the testimony of submitting to God unto death and loving God to the utmost. Thus, Peter was a person of good caliber. Reflecting on myself, I did not view people or things according to God’s words. I always considered good speaking skills and quick wit as the standard for good caliber, and when I did not possess these inherent conditions, I lived in feelings of inferiority

and negativity, and became passive and slacked off in my duty. This not only hindered my own life entry but also caused losses to the church's work. Reflecting further, although my speaking skills were not very good, I could understand some of God's words when reading them and resolve some issues through fellowshiping the truth, and brothers and sisters evaluated my caliber as average. I needed to correctly view myself based on God's words and the evaluations of brothers and sisters, and not pass verdict on myself based on notions. Realizing this, I felt much relief in my heart. Later, I met with Ruijing, pointed out the issues she had one by one, and fellowshiped with her using relevant words of God. Ruijing was able to accept the pointers and help, and was willing to seek the truth, repent, and change. After practicing in this way, I felt very at ease and at peace.

Later, I reflected again, asking myself what other corrupt disposition might be behind my persistent feelings of inferiority? One day, I read God's words: **"Antichrists' cherishment of their reputation and status goes beyond that of normal people, and is something within their disposition essence; it is not a temporary interest, or the transient effect of their surroundings—it is something within their life, their bones, and so it is their essence. This is to say that in everything antichrists do, their first consideration is their own reputation and status, nothing else. For antichrists, reputation and status are their life, and their lifelong goal. In all they do, their first consideration is: 'What will happen to my status? And to my reputation? Will doing this give me a good reputation? Will it elevate my status in people's minds?' That is the first thing they think about, which is ample proof that they have the disposition and essence of antichrists; they would not consider these problems otherwise. It can be said that for antichrists, reputation and status are not some additional requirement, much less something**

extraneous that they could do without. They are part of the nature of antichrists, they are in their bones, in their blood, they are innate to them. Antichrists are not indifferent toward whether they possess reputation and status; this is not their attitude. Then, what is their attitude? Reputation and status are intimately connected to their daily lives, to their daily state, to what they pursue on a daily basis” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). From God’s words, I saw that antichrists particularly cherish reputation and status, and that they view reputation and status as important as life itself. I realized my behavior had been the same as that of antichrists. My thoughts and considerations are not for pursuing the truth, but rather always concerned about my reputation and status, worrying about gains and losses. Since childhood, I had cared deeply about others’ opinions of me, and when my relatives, friends, and colleagues said I spoke clumsily, I spoke with others less and closed myself off so I could at least reduce the damage to my self-esteem. After believing in God, although I knew that brothers and sisters were open and honest with each other, and that our shortcomings could be openly revealed without anyone ridiculing anyone else, my concern for reputation and status was too heavy, and in gatherings with people who had better caliber and speaking skills, I worried that brothers and sisters might look down on me for being clumsy in speech, so I tried to speak as little as possible to cover up my shortcomings and maintain my reputation and status. As a watering deacon, it was my responsibility to resolve everyone’s issues relating to duties and life entry, but I worried that my speech might be seen as trivial and verbose, leading brothers and sisters to look down on me, so I preferred to cast aside my duty to protect my own pride and status. The satanic poisons of “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies,” and “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark,”

became rules I lived by. I placed pride and status above everything else, even neglecting my most basic responsibilities. I had been so selfish and despicable. In what way had I been doing my duty? I was walking the path of an antichrist. If I continued like this without repenting, not only would I fail to receive the Holy Spirit's work, but I would also be eliminated by God. From then on, I became willing to repent to God and free myself from the bondage of these negative emotions.

During a gathering with newcomers, I saw Sister Yiyi fellowshipping God's words clearly, with fluent expression. Brothers and sisters all nodded in agreement at what she said, and I felt a sense of inferiority again. I thought to myself, "Look how good Yiyi is at expressing herself and how enlightening her fellowship is. I'm so bad at expressing myself, will the brothers and sisters ridicule me for having believed in God for such a long time but still not being as enlightening in fellowship as a newcomer?" So I hesitated to fellowship. When I had these thoughts, I realized I was trapped in concerns about reputation and status again, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in casting off this wrong state. I read a passage of God's words: **"When the various negative emotions arise again, you will have awareness and discernment, you will know the harm they do to you and, of course, you must also gradually let go of them. When these emotions arise, you will be able to practice self-restraint and apply wisdom, and you will be able to let them go or seek the truth to resolve and handle them. In any case, they should not affect you adopting the correct ways, the correct attitude, and the correct standpoint in how you view people and things, and how you comport yourself and act. In this way, the obstacles and blockages along your path in pursuit of the truth will grow ever fewer, you will be able to pursue the truth within the scope of normal humanity required by God without disturbance, or**

with ever fewer disturbances, and you will resolve the corrupt dispositions you reveal in all kinds of situations” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). God’s words provided me with a path of practice. When negative emotions arise again, I need to consciously discern them and then let them go. This period of living in negative emotions, and constantly considering my own pride and status was truly painful. In gathering with Sister Yiyi, God’s intention was not to reveal me or make me look bad, but to use the light from her fellowship to supplement my shortcomings, and to help me gain more. Realizing this, I felt less constrained, and I calmed down to listen to her fellowship. In her fellowship, I fathomed some more light, and after her fellowship, I shared my own understanding as well. Everyone benefited from the gathering, and the results were quite good. Through this experience, I saw that only God’s words are the truth, and I tasted that only by viewing people and matters, comporting oneself, and doing things according to God’s words can one live a truly free and liberated life.

20. No Longer Bound by Fame and Status

By Xiao Han, China

Ling Xin was riding her bike down an empty street. It was the coldest part of winter, and the biting wind made her shiver uncontrollably. Her heart was filled with anxiety. She was on her way to a gathering with some waterers, and she had heard that two of the brothers were particularly serious with their work, always eager to seek out problems. Ling Xin was worried, as she thought, “I’m so young and just started practicing as the supervisor. What if I can’t solve their problems? How humiliating would that be?” She wanted to ride slower, but the gusts of cold wind wouldn’t let her linger on the road. She quickened her pace, hurrying to the gathering.

When Ling Xin arrived at the host’s house, everyone exchanged greetings and began to fellowship and talk about their work. Later, the fellowship turned to the significance of suffering while doing one’s duty. Ling Xin fellowshiped her understanding of this topic. After listening to her, Brother Su Rui, one of the waterers, said, “To resolve the issue of fearing suffering while doing our duty, we not only need to understand the meaning of suffering but also need to dissect which aspect of our corrupt disposition leads to always indulging in the comforts. I used to care for the flesh and avoid suffering, but then I read God’s words....” As Ling Xin listened, it felt like Su Rui was directly fellowshiping to her, and she suddenly felt her face flush with heat, thinking, “Has Su Rui noticed my shortcomings? Does he think I’m not that competent as the supervisor? Does he think my life entry is so shallow, yet I’m here fellowshiping with them!” Ling Xin felt fidgeted.

Throughout the afternoon, the brothers asked many questions, and Ling Xin kept thinking all the time, not daring to relax for a moment. Then,

Su Rui raised another question that Ling Xin couldn't answer clearly. After she fellowshipped her thoughts, Su Rui still didn't understand, and they all fell silent. The clock continued to tick, and the soft sound of its movement was especially loud and clear at that moment. "What are we supposed to do now?" Brother Li Yang broke the silence. Su Rui responded, "We're waiting for the supervisor to fellowship. This issue hasn't been fellowshipped clearly yet." Ling Xin smiled awkwardly and tried to stay calm, saying, "I'm still thinking about it." But inside, her mind was a tangled mess, and she felt anxious and worried. "What if I can't resolve this issue? Wouldn't that be embarrassing?" Fortunately, everyone started to fellowship one after another, and the issue was resolved to some degree. Ling Xin let out a long sigh, and glanced at the time on her computer—it was already late—so she quickly packed her things and hurried out.

By the time she headed back, the sun had already set, and the last bit of twilight was gradually fading away, leaving Ling Xin with a face full of disappointment and loss. She thought, "After a long day, the brothers have seen right through me. I wanted to leave others a good impression, but I couldn't believe it turned out like this. Will they say I'm not doing a great job as the supervisor? Will they say my life entry is shallow and my skills aren't good, either? Why do they have so many questions? Can't they just ask fewer?" Ling Xin complained in her heart, "I won't go to this group anymore. The more I go, the more embarrassed I get. Anyway, there's a sister I'm partnered with. Just let her go instead."

After this incident, Ling Xin was unable to feel released for a long time. Whenever it came to having gatherings for waterers, she just wanted to run. She knew she was living in a corrupt disposition, so she consciously ate and drank God's words regarding her state. She read God's words: **"Standing in the proper place of a created being and being an ordinary**

person: Is this easy to do? (It is not easy.) Wherein is the difficulty? It is this: People always feel that their heads are topped with many halos and titles. They also give themselves the identity and status of great figures and supermen and engage in all those pretended and false practices and outward shows. If you don't let go of these things, if your words and deeds are always constrained and controlled by these things, then you will find it difficult to enter into the reality of God's word. It will be hard to stop fretting for solutions for things you don't understand and bring such matters before God more often and offer to Him a sincere heart. You won't be able to do this. It is exactly because your status, your titles, your identity, and all such things are false and untrue, because they go against and contradict God's words, that these things bind you up so that you cannot come before God. What do these things bring to you? They make you good at disguising yourself, pretending to understand, pretending to be smart, pretending to be a great figure, pretending to be a celebrity, pretending to be capable, pretending to be wise, and even pretending to know everything, be capable of everything, and be able to do everything. This makes it so others will worship and admire you. They will come to you with all their problems, relying on you and looking up to you. Thus, it is as if you put yourself on a fire to roast. Tell Me, does it feel good to roast on the fire? (No.) You don't understand, but you dare not say that you don't understand. You can't see through, but you don't dare to say you can't see through. You obviously made a mistake, but you dare not admit it. Your heart is in anguish, but you dare not say, 'This time it's really my fault, I owe a debt to God and to my brothers and sisters. I have caused such a great loss to the house of God, but I don't have the courage to stand before everyone and admit it.' Why do you dare not

speak? You believe, ‘I need to live up to the reputation and halo my brothers and sisters have given me, I can’t betray the high regard and trust they have for me, much less the eager expectations that they have held for me over so many years. Therefore, I have to keep pretending.’ What is such a disguise like? You have successfully made yourself into a great figure and a superman. Brothers and sisters want to come to you to inquire, consult, and even beseech your counsel about whatever problems they face. It seems that they cannot even live without you. But isn’t your heart in anguish? Of course, some people don’t feel this anguish. An antichrist doesn’t feel this anguish. Instead, they delight in it, thinking that their status is above all else. An average, normal person, however, feels anguish when they are roasted on the fire. They feel that they are nothing at all, just like an ordinary person. They do not believe that they are stronger than others. They not only think that they cannot accomplish any practical work, but that they will also delay the work of the church and delay God’s chosen people, so they will take the blame and resign. This is someone with reason” (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God’s Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). Ling Xin pondered on God’s words and realized that she had been living for reputation and status, considering in every situation how to maintain her status and position as a supervisor. She thought back to the time before she had become a supervisor. She’d never carried a burden, no matter whether she was fellowshipping the truth or communicating and exploring questions she didn’t understand with people. She would share as much as she knew, neither afraid of saying something wrong, nor feeling nervous about her lack of understanding. She had known her life entry was shallow and that she didn’t fully grasp some principles, so she had to fellowship and seek more to make up for what she lacked. But now things

were different, being a supervisor. She'd felt that she always had to be better than the other brothers and sisters, that her fellowshiping on the truth had to be more in-depth, and that her work capabilities couldn't be too poor. She'd thought she had to be able to fellowship solutions to questions others raised; otherwise, the brothers and sisters would look down on her. When she had attended gatherings, Su Rui had pointed out the deficiencies in her fellowshiping on the truth. She had also encountered some problems she couldn't understand clearly, and even though she didn't know the answers, she had been unwilling to admit it. She had been preoccupied with her own pride and status, and felt ill at ease. She had also worried that if she continued going to hold gatherings with the waterers, she would embarrass herself even more, so she had become reluctant to go, thinking this would help cover up her deficiencies and shortcomings, and preserve her image as a supervisor. Ling Xin realized that she had put herself on a pedestal, and that she had been trying to disguise herself as a great person with no shortcomings. She had been truly arrogant and lacking in self-knowledge! It was perfectly normal for her to expose her own issues and shortcomings since she was new as a supervisor, and God was using these issues and difficulties as opportunities for her to practice. She had to earnestly seek out the truth principles to solve these problems, rather than choosing to avoid them because she perceived herself to be inadequate; what's more, by doing the latter, she hadn't been fulfilling her responsibilities. Ling Xin saw God's requirements for people: **“Do not fret for solutions to what you do not understand; bring such matters before God more often, and offer to Him a sincere heart”** (God's Fellowship). Ling Xin came to understand that God wants people, when they are faced with things they don't understand, to often come before Him to pray and seek with a sincere heart. But she had been tightly bound by her concern for pride and status, always thinking

about how to preserve her image and status. She knew she was lacking a lot, but she hadn't thought about how to solve problems in order to advance the work. That the brothers were fairly serious about their work was a good thing; whereas she, unable to understand the truth and solve problems, had blamed others for asking too many questions—she truly had been impervious to reason! After realizing these things, Ling Xin kept reading God's words and found a path of practice.

Almighty God says: **“Tell Me, how can you be people who are ordinary and normal? How can you, as God says, assume the proper place of a created being—how can you not try to be a superman, or some great figure? How should you practice to be an ordinary and normal person? How can this be done? ... Firstly, don't give yourself a title and become bound by it, saying, ‘I am the leader, I am the head of the team, I am the supervisor, no one knows this business better than me, no one understands the skills more than me.’ Don't get caught up in your self-appointed title. As soon as you do, it will bind your hands and feet, and what you say and do will be affected. Your normal thinking and judgment will also be affected. You must free yourself from the constraints of this status. First, lower yourself from this official title and position and stand in the place of an ordinary person. If you do, your mentality will become somewhat normal. You must also admit and say, ‘I don't know how to do this, and I don't understand that, either—I'm going to have to do some research and studying,’ or ‘I've never experienced this, so I don't know what to do.’ When you are capable of saying what you're really thinking and speaking honestly, you will be possessed of normal reason. Others will know the real you, and will thus have a normal view of you, and you will not have to put on an act, nor will there be any great pressure on you, and so you will**

be able to communicate with people normally. Living like this is free and easy; anyone who finds living exhausting has caused this themselves. Don't pretend or put up a front. First, open up about what you're thinking in your heart, about your true thoughts, so that everyone is aware of them and understands them. As a result, your concerns and the barriers and suspicions between you and others will all be eliminated. You're also hobbled by something else. You always consider yourself the head of the team, a leader, a worker, or someone with a title, status, and standing: If you say you don't understand something, or can't do something, are you not denigrating yourself? When you put aside these fetters in your heart, when you stop thinking of yourself as a leader or a worker, and when you stop thinking that you're better than other people and feel that you are an ordinary person, the same as everyone else, and that there are some areas in which you are inferior to others—when you fellowship the truth and work-related matters with this attitude, the effect is different, as is the atmosphere. If, in your heart, you always have misgivings, if you always feel stressed and hobbled, and if you want to rid yourself of these things but can't, then you should pray seriously to God, reflect on yourself, see your shortcomings, and strive toward the truth. If you can put the truth into practice, you will get results. Whatever you do, don't speak and act from a certain position or using a certain title. First, put all this to one side, and put yourself in the place of an ordinary person"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). From God's words, Ling Xin realized that she needed to let go of her status as a supervisor, and that she was just an ordinary person, the same as everyone else, just doing a different duty. Now that she was a supervisor, it simply meant bearing more responsibility, but

her stature remained the same as it had been originally. Becoming a supervisor didn't mean that her stature had grown, or that she had a clearer understanding of various aspects of the truth—it had been unrealistic to think that. Moreover, having served as a waterer for so long, her brothers and sisters already knew her for what she really was; didn't the fact that she had wanted to pretend to be someone superior mean that she had tried to deceive both herself and others, and put herself to roast over a fire? Ling Xin understood that she had to let go of the title of supervisor, treat her shortcomings correctly, fellowship on and explore what she did not understand with others, or seek the truth herself to resolve it, and take every revelation as a good opportunity for life growth.

The weather was gradually getting warmer, and the wind became much gentler. Ling Xin has taken off her heavy cotton clothes, feeling relaxed and pleased.

Shortly after this, Ling Xin was assigned to take charge of sermon work. When she saw that some brothers and sisters had written sermons before and that some had many years of experience in preaching the gospel, she couldn't help but lament, "Which one of them isn't better than me? How am I supposed to supervise this work?" Ling Xin felt overwhelmed, worrying that if she couldn't direct the work properly, the brothers and sisters might be unconvinced of her and say, "You're the supervisor, but can you really handle being a supervisor like this?" She worried that if the results were poor and she ended up getting dismissed, she'd be utterly humiliated. Ling Xin found herself living amidst repression and worry.

The rain outside had been drizzling continuously for several days, though it wasn't heavy. Ling Xin noticed that the quality of the sermons submitted by the brothers and sisters wasn't very high, and she wanted to

fellowship with them about the principles. However, she hesitated, thinking, “Last time during the gathering, I just sat on the side, barely able to say a few words. That was super embarrassing. I don’t even know what the brothers and sisters think of me. If I go this time and still can’t solve any problems, what should I do? Maybe I shouldn’t go, that way I won’t lose face.” Ling Xin looked out the window; the rain kept falling. She comforted herself by thinking, “Although I’m not going to have fellowship with them, I can still fellowship through a letter. It should be the same whether I go or not.”

One day, the leader made an appointment with Ling Xin to have a gathering. After inquiring into the work situation, the leader pointed out that Ling Xin was not being responsible in her duty, and that she was failing to actually follow up on the work and solve problems, which was resulting in sermons being of poor quality. Ling Xin felt deeply ashamed, and she hated herself for always worrying about her pride and status, which delayed the work. The leader then shared some of God’s words, and one particular passage moved Ling Xin somewhat. Almighty God says: **“It doesn’t matter how talented you are, what level of caliber and education you possess, how many slogans you can shout, or how many words and doctrines are in your grasp; regardless of how busy you are or how exhausted you are in a day, or how far you’ve traveled, how many churches you visit, or how much risk you take and suffering you endure—none of these matter. What matters is whether you are performing your work based on the work arrangements, whether you are accurately implementing those arrangements; whether, during your leadership, you are participating in every specific work you are responsible for, and how many real issues you have actually resolved; how many individuals have come to understand the truth principles**

because of your leadership and guidance, and how much the church's work has advanced and developed—what matters is whether or not you have achieved these results. Regardless of the specific work you're involved in, what matters is whether you are consistently following up on and directing the work rather than acting high and mighty and issuing orders. Besides this, what also matters is whether or not you have life entry while doing your duty, whether you can deal with matters according to principles, whether you possess a testimony of putting the truth into practice, and whether you can handle and resolve the real issues faced by God's chosen people. These and other similar things are all criteria for assessing whether or not a leader or worker has fulfilled their responsibilities. Would you say that these criteria are practical? And fair toward people? (Yes.) They are fair for everyone. No matter your level of education, whether you are young or old, how many years you have believed in God, your seniority, or how much of God's word you have read, none of this is important. What matters is how well you do the church work after being chosen as a leader, how effective and efficient you are in your work, and whether each item of work progresses in an organized and effective manner, and is not delayed. These are the main things that are evaluated when measuring whether a leader or worker has or has not fulfilled their responsibilities” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (9)). Ling Xin saw that God fellowshiped that the duties of leaders and workers are to guide brothers and sisters to understand the truth principles and to promote the advancement of all items of work in God's house. God doesn't judge a person based on how much they appear to suffer, but rather by whether their duties yield real results and whether they fulfill their responsibilities. After reading God's words,

Ling Xin asked herself, “How much real work have I done since becoming a supervisor? Have I resolved all the issues I found? Has the work yielded real results and moved forward?” Ling Xin couldn’t answer any of these questions. As a leader and worker, when one notices that the work isn’t producing good results, one should actually investigate the reasons for these poor results and, depending on whether people are living in their corrupt dispositions or don’t grasp the principles, one should then resolve the problems in a targeted manner. However, fearing that she wouldn’t be able to resolve the problems and that others would see through her, she had only written letters to briefly fellowship the principles, which had resulted in the problems going unresolved and the work results being consistently poor. Wasn’t this all caused by her not doing real work? After the gathering, Ling Xin immediately went to meet with the brothers and sisters who were writing sermons. Through detailed inquiry, she found that they indeed hadn’t been writing according to the principles, so she fellowshipped some principles with everyone together. Just a few days later, a sermon of higher quality was submitted. Ling Xin was very pleased, but she also felt somewhat remorseful. If she’d addressed these problems earlier, the work wouldn’t have been delayed for so long. She asked herself, “Why couldn’t I let go of my pride? Why was it so difficult for me to practice the truth?” Determined to solve this problem, Ling Xin searched for more of God’s words on this matter.

Almighty God says: **“Antichrists live each day only for reputation and status, they live only to revel in the benefits of status, this is all they think about. Even when they do occasionally suffer some minor hardship or pay some trivial price, this is for the sake of obtaining status and reputation. Pursuing status, holding power, and having an easy life are major things that antichrists always scheme for once they**

believe in God, and they don't give up until they achieve their goals. If their evil deeds are ever exposed, they panic, as if the sky is about to fall on them. They can't eat or sleep, and they seem to be in a trance, as if they are suffering from depression. When people ask them what was wrong, they make up lies and say, 'Yesterday I was so busy that I didn't sleep all night, so I'm very tired.' But actually, none of this is true, it is all deception. They feel this way because they are constantly pondering, 'The bad things I did have been exposed, so how can I restore my reputation and status? What means can I use to redeem myself? What tone can I use with everyone to explain this? What can I say to keep people from seeing through me?' For a long time, they can't figure out what to do, and so they are depressed. Sometimes their eyes stare blankly at a single spot, and no one knows what they are looking at. The issue makes them rack their brains, exhaust every train of thought, and not want to eat or drink. Despite this, they still put on the appearance of caring about church work, and ask people, 'How is the gospel work going? How effectively is it being preached? Have the brothers and sisters gained any life entry recently? Has anyone been causing any disruptions or disturbances?' These inquiries of theirs about the church's work are meant as a show for others. If they did learn of problems, they would have no way to resolve them, so their questions are a mere formality that others are liable to see as care for the church's work. If someone should make a report of the church's problems for them to resolve, they would just shake their heads. No scheme would avail them, and though they would wish to disguise themselves, they could not, and they would risk being exposed and revealed. This is the biggest problem antichrists face in their entire lives. ... Although the church's work continues under the rule of

antichrists, its effectiveness has greatly diminished. Some important work is still controlled by evil individuals, and the work arrangements of God's house have not been implemented. Although God's chosen people are each doing their duty, there is no real result, and various tasks have long fallen into a state of paralysis. What is the root cause of these problems? It's because antichrists have taken control of the church. Anywhere antichrists hold power, no matter the scope of their influence, even if it is just one group, they will influence the work of God's house and the life entry of a portion of God's chosen people. If they hold power in a church, church work and God's will are hindered there. Why can't the work arrangements of God's house be implemented in certain churches? It is because antichrists hold power in these churches. Anyone who is an antichrist will not sincerely expend for God, the performance of their duties will just be a matter of formalities and going through the motions. They will not do real work even if they are leaders or workers, and they will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, without protecting the work of the church at all" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God exposed that antichrists live solely for reputation and status, and that they spend their days focused on how to protect these things. They show no concern for the work of God's house, and they avoid doing specific work. But when their reputation or status is threatened, even if it's just a minor loss, they rack their brains and go to great lengths to disguise and conceal themselves. It's clear that antichrists don't care about the work of God's house, neglect their proper duties, and that they are utterly selfish and despicable. Ling Xin realized that she'd been behaving just like an antichrist, cherishing reputation and status above all else. She didn't care about the church's work; just so long as her reputation and status were

secure, nothing else mattered. It was as if doing the church's work was an extra burden on her. Her main focus was on maintaining her reputation and status. After making a fool of herself in front of the brothers and sisters at a gathering with the waterers, she felt so repressed and upset that she didn't want to go for gatherings there anymore. Now, while following up on the sermon work, she found that instead of thinking of quickly learning after identifying her shortcomings, she just wanted to run and cover up her problems, so that she could avoid appearing incompetent. Her responsibility was to promptly identify various issues in the duty, and to guide the brothers and sisters to seek the truth and enter into principles so that the work could progress smoothly. Her lack of clear understanding of the truth and inexperience in the work were not valid reasons or excuses for not doing real work. God doesn't demand great results but hopes that people can put their heart and utmost efforts into cooperation, so that they can make progress in their duties and compensate for their shortcomings. But Ling Xin had been focusing only on maintaining her reputation and status and hadn't been doing any real work. To cover up her shortcomings, she had become a hands-off worker, harming the church's work. Not only did she fail to contribute to the progress of the work, but she also delayed and impacted the work. How could God not detest these actions of hers? She thought about how the antichrists expelled from the church were deeply concerned with their reputation and status, and about how they enjoyed the esteem of brothers and sisters, and only did things that protected their reputation and status, and they didn't care even if it disrupted the church's work. In the end, their numerous evil deeds led to their being expelled and eliminated. Ling Xin realized that she was also revealing the disposition of an antichrist, and that if she didn't repent, she would end up with the same outcome. Reflecting on this, Ling Xin silently resolved that, moving

forward, she would put all her heart into cooperating, that she wouldn't be constrained by concerns about her pride and status, and that she'd do her duty in a steadfast manner. If she didn't understand something, she would study the relevant principles or put herself aside and seek from the brothers and sisters. In this way, she could gradually come to do her duty well.

In the following days, Ling Xin focused on actually studying and equipping herself with the relevant truth principles. When fellowshiping with others, she approached it with a learning and sharing mindset. Whenever she encountered something she didn't understand, she proactively sought advice from others. She didn't care about how others might view her. As long as she could strive toward God's requirements and fulfill her duty wholeheartedly, it would be enough.

The long overcast and rainy weather made the air oppressive and heavy, but all of this shall eventually pass. The sun will come out. By then, the sky will be bright and colorful.

Finally, the rain stopped, and the sky gradually became sunny...

21. Is It a Wise Move to Keep Silent on Others' Faults?

By Nanyi, China

In April 2023, I unintentionally saw the leader's evaluation of me, saying that I was a people pleaser, and that I lacked a sense of justice. It mentioned that I had seen quite a few co-workers living in corrupt dispositions which affected their work, but that I had not fellowshiped or pointed it out; it stated that I was not protecting the interests of the church, and that my humanity was not so good. Seeing the leader's evaluation, I felt somewhat aggrieved. "I've always gotten along harmoniously with my partners," I thought, "and haven't done anything to torment and suppress anyone. Sometimes I did fellowship and point out the problems I observed in my co-workers. Although my humanity wasn't perfect, surely it was at least average. They lived in corrupt dispositions and failed to recognize themselves because they didn't strive for the truth; how was that my responsibility? How can the leader say I have poor humanity?" It's hard to describe how deeply hurt I felt; it was like spilling a jar of mixed flavors; I couldn't tell what kind of feeling it was. Despite my many years of faith in God, the leader had evaluated my consistent performance as that of a people pleaser who didn't protect the interests of God's house and had poor humanity. That being the case, could my disposition still be changed? During those days, whenever I thought of the leader's words, it was like a knife piercing my heart. I couldn't stop the tears from flowing, and I lost the motivation to do anything. But I realized that there were still many issues in my work; wouldn't retreating into negativity at this point reveal my lack of humanity all the more? So, I forced myself to do my duty and prayed to

God, resolving to first submit to the situations like this which I faced and to reflect on myself to learn lessons from them.

Later, I pondered on why others said I was a people pleaser who didn't protect the interests of God's house. My thoughts returned to the scenes from a few years ago when I interacted with several co-workers. In 2019, I was partnered with Xiaozhen, responsible for the text-based work. During that time, Xiaozhen lived in a defensive state, feeling that her arrogant disposition was serious, and that if she continued to disrupt and disturb the work based on her corrupt disposition, there would be no good outcome and destination for her. As a result, she was very passive in doing her duty and rarely participated in our discussions. I knew Xiaozhen was in a state of defense and misunderstanding. She actually had some working abilities and could perform some work if her state was normal. I wanted to point out her issues. But I thought, since she just started to practice, would pointing out her issues make me seem inconsiderate and demanding? If she had negative thoughts about me, how would we get along in the future? So, I just gave her a simple exhortation, "Let's not always live in our corrupt dispositions; we should actively and proactively learn about our professional skills and strive for improvement." Later, seeing that her state hadn't improved much, I thought, "I've reminded you, but if you don't enter, there's nothing I can do." So, I didn't fellowship further. Eventually, Xiaozhen's state didn't improve, and she was dismissed due to ineffectiveness in her duty. There was another sister, Lin Lin, who, seeing that her new partner, Brother Yang Zhi, was more skilled in the profession and grasped some principles, felt inferior and became less proactive in her duty. During a fellowship, she opened up about her state and even cried. Seeing that she cared too much about reputation and status, I originally wanted to dissect the nature and consequences of pursuing these things for her, but I thought she was already

very distressed, and pointing out her problems directly might embarrass her and make her think I was unsympathetic. How would we get along in the future? So, I lightly said, “Don’t always dwell on reputation and status; try to learn from others’ merits when collaborating.” Later, Lin Lin still didn’t gain much understanding of the nature and consequences of pursuing reputation and status. Her state was sometimes good and sometimes bad. She was very passive in her duty and was eventually dismissed as well.

Recalling all the various moments of cooperating and associating with several sisters and reflecting on myself according to God’s words, I gained some understanding of my own state. I read a passage of God’s words: **“Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; the truth has not become their life. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter evil people and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus disturbing the work of the church and harming God’s chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? Neither; this is primarily the consequence of being constrained by corrupt dispositions. One of the corrupt dispositions you reveal is a deceitful disposition; when something happens to you, the first thing you think of is your own interests, the first thing you consider is the consequences, whether this will be beneficial to you. This is a deceitful disposition, is it not? Another is a selfish and base disposition. You think, ‘What does a loss to the interests of God’s house have to do with me? I’m not a leader, so why should I care? It’s got nothing to do with me. It’s not my**

responsibility.’ Such thoughts and words are not something that you consciously think, but are produced by your subconscious—which is the corrupt disposition revealed when people encounter an issue. Corrupt dispositions such as this govern the way you think, they bind your hands and feet, and control what you say. In your heart, you want to stand up and speak, but you have misgivings, and even when you do speak out, you beat around the bush, and leave yourself wiggle room, or else you prevaricate and don’t tell the truth. People who are clear-eyed can see this; in truth, you know in your heart that you have not said all you should, that what you have said has had no effect, that you were merely going through the motions, and that the problem has not been solved. You have not fulfilled your responsibility, yet you say overtly that you have fulfilled your responsibility, or that what was happening was unclear to you. Is this true? And is it what you really think? Are you not then completely under the control of your satanic disposition?’” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

Reflecting on God’s words, I felt that God truly scrutinizes the depths of people’s hearts and had exposed my innermost intentions. I recalled that when collaborating with a few co-workers, I hadn’t truly pointed out their problems. Sometimes, even when fellowshiping, I had only offered some simple exhortations or made light of their issues. I hadn’t dared to pinpoint that their problems were actually due to living in deceitful dispositions, for fear that doing so would ruin our relationship and make it difficult for us to get along in future. For example, when I had been partnered with Xiaozhen and Lin Lin, I had seen that Xiaozhen was always concerned about her own prospects and destiny, and couldn’t devote herself to her duty, while Lin Lin was preoccupied with her reputation and status, and had no inclination to do her duty. I’d noticed these issues they had, but considering that we spent

every day together, from morning until night, and saw each other all the time, wouldn't pointing out their problems have made them think I was callous, overly harsh, and unsympathetic to their difficulties, causing them to develop a prejudice against me? Fearing that it might be difficult to get along with them in future, I hadn't highlighted the nature and consequences of their problems. In fact, it's normal to have one's problems pointed out by others. Those who truly accept the truth will reflect on themselves in the light of such corrections, recognize their issues, and be able to feel remorse and turn themselves around—this is of genuine help to them. But I had been living in a deceitful disposition, and when I had noticed issues in their duties that affected the work of the church, all I had done was to briefly mention it. When they had eventually been dismissed, I had even thought with a clear conscience that it was caused by their own lack of pursuing and striving for the truth, and I hadn't reflected on my own problems at all—I really had been too selfish and deceitful!

Afterward, I continued to reflect on myself. Why did I always speak softly about the problems I saw in my co-workers and couldn't directly expose their issues? I read another passage of God's words: **“There is a tenet in philosophies for worldly dealings that says, ‘Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship.’ It means that in order to preserve a friendly relationship, one must keep silent about their friend's problems, even if they see them clearly—that they should abide by the principles of not striking people in the face or calling out their shortcomings. They are to deceive each other, hide from each other, engage in intrigue with each other; and though they know with crystal clarity what sort of person the other is, they do not say it outright, but employ cunning methods to preserve their friendly relationship. Why would one want to preserve such relationships? It is**

about not wanting to make enemies in this society, within one's group, which would mean subjecting oneself often to dangerous situations. Knowing someone will become your enemy and harm you after you have called out their shortcomings or hurt them, and not wishing to put yourself in such a situation, you employ the tenet of philosophies for worldly dealings that runs, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings.' In light of this, if two people are in such a relationship, do they count as true friends? (No.) They are not true friends, much less each other's confidant. So, what sort of relationship is this, exactly? Is it not a fundamental social relationship? (It is.) In such social relationships, people cannot offer their feelings, nor have deep exchanges, nor speak about whatever they wish. They cannot say out loud what is in their heart, or the problems they see in the other, or words that would benefit the other. Instead, they pick nice things to say, to keep the other's favor. They dare not speak the truth or uphold the principles, lest it give rise to animosity toward them in others. When no one is threatening to someone, does that person not live in relative ease and peace? Is this not people's goal in promoting the saying, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings'? (It is.) Clearly, this is a cunning, deceptive way of existence with an element of defensiveness, whose goal is self-preservation. People who live like this have no confidants, no close friends with whom they can say whatever they like. They are defensive with each other, and calculating, and strategic, each taking what they need from the relationship. Is this not so? At its root, the goal of 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings' is to keep from offending others and

making enemies, to protect oneself by not causing hurt to anyone. It is a technique and method one adopts to keep themselves from being hurt”

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). God’s words made me see clearly that my partnership and interactions with others were bound by Satan’s philosophy for worldly dealings “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship” and “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings.” I had believed that when interacting with others, I must learn to protect myself; I had also believed that exposing others’ problems was offensive to them and could easily cause them to develop a bias against me, making enemies with them and putting me in an awkward position. Consequently, I hadn’t dared to expose others’ issues. Thinking back, I realized that I had been living by these philosophies for worldly dealings since my childhood, never directly pointing out the problems I saw in others, for fear of offending them. I would appear superficially to be on good terms with people, maintaining relationships among people. Interacting with others this way didn’t offend anyone on the surface, but it prevented genuine communications with others and created a kind of constant barrier between us. As a result, I had no true confidants. In the church, I had continued living by these philosophies. When cooperating with Xiaozhen and Lin Lin, I had seen that they were living in corrupt dispositions and lacking a burden in their duties. I had worried that pointing out their problems would hurt their feelings and make me seem unsympathetic, so I had kept silent about my insights, letting them live in their corrupt dispositions and delay their duties, eventually leading to their dismissals. I used to regard these philosophies for worldly dealings like “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship” and “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you

call others out, don't call out their shortcomings," as positive things, thinking that by doing so, I could protect myself from making enemies with others, and that it was a smart move. Only now did I realize that by living according to these philosophies for worldly dealings, although I might have appeared not to offend anyone and kept on good terms with my co-workers, I had become extremely selfish and deceitful, and my collaborations and interactions with others had become particularly cold and brought no benefits to their life entry, besides also causing damage to the church's work. Seeing that living by these philosophies for worldly dealings not only harms others and myself, but above all damages the church's work, I realized that this is truly not a good path to take.

Later on, I continued to reflect and realized that there was another wrong perspective inside me when I tried to be a people pleaser. I thought that some co-workers' dismissals were due to their own lack of pursuing the truth and had nothing to do with me, so I didn't feel self-blamed when they were dismissed. Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"What is cooperation? You have to be able to discuss things with each other, and express your views and opinions; you must complement and supervise each other, and seek from each other, make inquiries of each other, and prompt each other. That's what it is to cooperate in harmony. Say, for instance, you handled something according to your own will, and someone said, 'You did it wrong, entirely against the principles. Why did you handle it however you wanted, without seeking the truth?' To this, you say, 'That's right—I'm glad you alerted me! If you hadn't, it would have spelled disaster!' That's what prompting each other is. What is it, then, to supervise each other? Everyone has a corrupt disposition, and may be perfunctory in doing their duty, safeguarding only their own status and pride, not the interests of God's house. Such**

states are there in every person. If you learn that someone has a problem, you should take the initiative to fellowship with them, reminding them to do their duty according to the principles, while letting it stand as a warning to yourself. That's mutual supervision. What function does mutual supervision serve? It's meant to safeguard the interests of God's house, and also to keep people from taking the wrong road" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)).

God's words made me understand that the church arranges for several people to work together to complement each other's merits and shortcomings, and to remind and supervise one another. Especially when seeing someone living in a wrong state that affects the work, we should remind, help, or even prune them to prevent them from walking the wrong path, which could cause losses to the work of the church. Doing this is also to protect the church's interests and is our responsibility. When I had been partnered with a few sisters and seen them living in corrupt dispositions that affected their work, I should have stepped up to offer them fellowship and help and, if necessary, I should have exposed and pruned them. If they were people who accept the truth, then through this fellowshipping and exposure, they could have recognized their own problems, turned themselves around in time, and stopped short of suffering a loss in their life. After turning their state around, they could also have done their duties better. If they didn't accept the truth, my conscience would have been clear because I had fulfilled my responsibility by engaging in fellowship and helping them. Later, I learned that after being dismissed, Xiaozhen and Lin Lin had reflected and come to recognize their problems and had later resumed doing duties. This showed that they were not people who didn't accept the truth, but had just been living in a corrupt state and walking the wrong path for a period of time. But I had just stood by and

watched them being bound by corrupt dispositions, affecting the church's work without offering them fellowship and help. I had been truly irresponsible!

I used to think that I could get along well with others and hadn't done anything obvious to suppress or torment people, so I believed my humanity was relatively good. But after comparing myself with God's words, I began to gain some understanding of myself. I read more of God's words: **"There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone speak well of you. This is not the standard. So, what is the standard? It is being able to submit to God and the truth. It is approaching one's duty and all manner of people, events, and things with principles and a sense of responsibility. This is plain for all to see; everyone is clear about this in their heart. Moreover, God scrutinizes people's hearts and knows their situation, each and every one; no matter who they are, no one can fool God. Some people always boast that they possess good humanity, that they never speak ill of others, never harm anyone else's interests, and they claim never to have coveted other people's property. When there is a dispute over interests, they even prefer to suffer loss than take advantage of others, and everyone else thinks they are good people. However, when performing their duties in God's house, they are wily and slippery, always scheming for themselves. Never do they think of the interests of God's house, never do they treat as urgent the things God treats as urgent or think as God thinks, and never can they set aside their own interests so as to perform their duties. They never forsake their own interests. Even when they see evil people committing**

evil, they do not expose them; they have no principles whatsoever. What kind of humanity is this? It is not good humanity” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One’s Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). From God’s words, I realized that a person with truly good humanity has a sincere heart for God, is loving toward brothers and sisters, collaborates with others according to principles, takes a stand and when seeing someone disrupting or affecting the church work, they could stand up to expose it and protect the interests of God’s house. However, in order to maintain relationships with people, I saw others living in corrupt dispositions and taking the wrong path, but I did not fellowship with them to help, which caused some losses to the work. Only now did I see clearly that my humanity was indeed not good, and I genuinely accepted the leader’s evaluation of me from my heart.

Later, I read a passage of God’s words, which provided a path of practice to solve the issue of being a people pleaser. God says: **“If you have the motivations and perspective of a people pleaser, then, in all matters, you will be incapable of practicing the truth and abiding by principle, and you will always fail and fall down. If you do not awaken and do not ever seek the truth, then you are a disbeliever, and you will never gain the truth and life. What, then, should you do? When faced with such things, you must pray to God and call out to Him, begging for salvation and asking that He give you more faith and strength and enable you to abide by the principles, do what you should do, handle things according to the principles, stand firm in the position you should stand in, protect the interests of God’s house, and prevent any harm from coming to the work of God’s house. If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have**

defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading God’s words, I understood that whenever I have the mindset and intention to be a people pleaser, I should pray to God more, asking Him to give me the strength to rebel against myself. Instead of maintaining relationships with others, I should practice the truth, abide by the principles, and be someone who upholds the work of the church. In this way, I can gradually enter into the truth reality of this aspect.

Later, I was assigned to supervise the work in another church. A few days after I arrived, I noticed that the brothers and sisters I was cooperating with were very busy with various work every day, and sometimes they were so busy that they didn’t have fellowships. Their church life was not normal. I thought to myself, “The primary responsibility of being a leader and a worker is to ensure a good church life, leading brothers and sisters to eat and drink and understand God’s words to enter the truth reality. But if everyone is busy with work every day and doesn’t focus on their own life entry, how could they lead brothers and sisters to live a good church life?” I really wanted to point out this problem to everyone, but I hesitated, “I’ve just got here and if I point out the issue now, it might seem like I’m trying to show how diligently I pursue the truth. Moreover, there is a lot of work to handle every day, which is a real issue. If I bring it up now, would they think I am inconsiderate and only pick faults, thus having a bad impression of me? That would make our future cooperation and interaction really awkward!” When I thought this way, I couldn’t open my mouth, but not speaking up also made me feel self-blamed. I felt that although we were busy every day, with proper planning, we could still find time to have gatherings. Moreover, as leaders and workers, if we don’t pay attention to living the church life and don’t strive for the truth, it is easy to go astray. I

couldn't continue to maintain relationships with others as I used to, failing to point out the problems I discovered. That would harm others and myself, and also delay the church work. Then I thought of God's words: **"If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Thinking of this, I pointed out the problems I noticed in front of everyone and fellowshiped on the consequences of not focusing on living the church life. Several co-workers also mentioned that they hadn't been paying attention to living the church life recently. Although they were busy every day, they felt empty inside and couldn't see through their own states or the issues in their work. They were willing to turn this around. After that, we planned our time reasonably, met regularly for fellowship, reflected on our own states in light of God's words, and promptly fellowshiped and summarized any issues or deviations in our work. By practicing this way, everyone gained some benefits. Not only did we gain discernment of our own corrupt dispositions and fallacious views on things, but we also saw more clearly about the problems and deviations in our work.

After going through this experience, I have gained a correct understanding about the meaning of good humanity. It is not merely appearing not to fight, argue, suppress, or torment others that makes good humanity. True good humanity involves being able to point out and fellowship about the problems one sees in others, helping people in doing their duties and in their life entry, taking a stand against things they see that are not in line with the truth, upholding the principles to point them out and safeguarding the church work. Meanwhile, I have also come to see the

nature and consequences of being a people pleaser more clearly, and I am able to consciously rebel against myself and conduct myself according to God's words. This minor transformation and understanding I gained was due to God's salvation. Thank God!

22. I Have Come to Know How to Treat My Parents' Kindness

By Wang Tao, China

When I was three years old, my parents divorced due to their emotional incompatibility, and when I was four, I had a stepmother. In the haze of my distant memories, I remember that several elderly ladies from the neighborhood often told me, “Poor child, you’re going to suffer later, stepmothers never care for their children! Don’t anger your stepmother, little one, you need to be obedient and hardworking so you won’t be beaten and get to eat.” At that time, I only half understood what they meant, and I felt a bit scared, so I never dared to make my stepmother angry. But to my surprise, my stepmother treated me very well, as if I were her own son. Later, I had a younger brother, and my stepmother continued to care for and love me just the same. In fact, she was even more loving than my biological mother. My stepmother often told my brother and me, “Your father and I work hard and suffer to earn money, and everything we do is to build new houses for you both and to prepare for when you both get married. When you grow up and start your own families, you must be filial to us. No matter how much hardship we endure, it will all be worth it!” Each time, I solemnly promised, “Mom, when I grow up, I’ll definitely take care of both of you.” My stepmother would always show a relieved smile and nod continuously when she heard this. My stepmother went through great hardship to raise me and she helped me marry and get started with my own family and career. I always remembered my grandmother’s words: “Giving birth isn’t as important as raising a child,” and “You get what you give with people, four ounces for half a pound as they say.” I thought this was the

principle of human conduct, and that if a person lacks conscience and is ungrateful, they aren't worthy of being called human.

In 1994, our whole family came to believe in the Lord Jesus. My wife and I often went out to care for the church, sometimes not returning for a day or two, even when our two-year-old child and the work in the fields needed our time and attention. My mother took the initiative to take on those chores so that we could serve the Lord well. In 2002, our entire family accepted the work of Almighty God of the last days. My parents fully supported me in my duties. Because I'd become well-known in my area for my faith in the Lord, after accepting this stage of work, my gospel work in the area attracted the attention of the police. To avoid being arrested by the police, I left home and spent many years doing my duties elsewhere. During the holidays, the sight of others reunited with their families made me really worry about my own family and miss my parents. During the busy farming season, in particular, I'd think about how my mother suffered from back and leg problems and rheumatism, and how in rainy weather when her pain became particularly bad, I usually tried to prevent them from doing heavy farm work at home. But now my wife and I were both out doing our duties, and my parents weren't just taking care of our child but also working in the fields. They were working so hard, and I thought of risking a return home to help with the farm work so they wouldn't have to labor anymore. But if I went back, I would likely be arrested by the police, and I wouldn't be able to help my parents much. Besides, I was busy with my duties and couldn't abandon my church work to return home. As I walked along the road, I saw farmers harvesting wheat in the fields, and it was as if I was watching my own mother lifting her head to wipe the sweat from her brow in the fields. Tears began to stream down my face, and I couldn't help but complain, "If it weren't for my faith in God and my

gospel work putting me at risk of arrest, I could have returned home to help my parents during the busy season!” The more I thought about it, the more I felt indebted to my parents. That evening, the image of my parents laboring unsteadily in the fields came to mind, and I couldn’t help but secretly shed tears. So I often prayed to God, entrusting my parents into His hands.

In December 2012, I was arrested by the police while preaching the gospel. During the interrogation, the police used cruel methods to torture me, and while in a daze, the police chief made me watch a video on his phone. I saw my ninety-year-old grandmother with sunken eyes and a vacant gaze, and it looked as if she might die at any moment. I also saw my mother, her hair gray and her face streaked with tears. Her lips trembled as if she was arguing about something, and she seemed very shaken up. As I watched the footage, tears streamed down my face. The chief of the national security team seized on this moment to say, “We’ve also checked with people from your village, and everyone speaks well of you. You’re a dutiful son. Your grandmother is nearing a hundred, and your parents are both in their seventies. They’re all looking forward to your return for a family reunion! Your grandmother is on the verge of passing. Don’t you want to see her one last time? As the saying goes, ‘In life, filial piety comes first.’ Didn’t your parents raise you so that they could rely on you and enjoy their twilight years? Can you bear to let them spend their old age in such solitude? They’re both elderly. You never know when you could be looking at them for the last time. If you’re sentenced to eight to ten years for your faith, you may never see them again, and you’ll end up regretting it for the rest of your life. If you just tell us what you know, I’ll send you straight home for a reunion. Think it over!” Upon hearing this, memories of my grandmother and mother caring for and loving me flooded my mind, and I couldn’t help but burst into tears. My mother hoped that I would care for

them when they grew old, and now they were both so old and in poor health, and at the time they needed me most, I wasn't there to fulfill my responsibilities as a son. Instead, I had caused them to live in fear due to my arrest. If I were sentenced to eight to ten years in prison, I might never see them again. The more I thought about it, the more negative I became, and I started to harbor grievances, thinking, "If I hadn't come here to preach the gospel and gotten arrested, couldn't I have cared for them? What should I do now? Should I prepare for prison, or should I compromise with Satan and devils to repay my parents' kindness? If I betray my brothers and sisters, or the interests of God's house, then I would be a shameful Judas, and my conscience would never find peace, and I'd be cursed by God and go to hell!" My heart was in turmoil, and my head felt like it was going to explode and I was on the verge of a breakdown. I cried out to God in prayer, "God, please save me! What should I do?" At that moment, a section of God's word came to mind: **"At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me; they should be able to support each other and provide for each other, so as to avoid falling into Satan's trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). God's words calmed my restless heart. Satan was scheming to use my affection to crush me and make me betray God. I couldn't fall for its tricks. I had to stand firm in my testimony! So I said, "I don't know anything. Do what you want with me!" The police exhausted their efforts but obtained no useful information, and in the end, the court sentenced me to three and a half years in prison.

In July 2016, my sentence in that hell on earth came to an end. When I got home, my mother cradled my head in her arms and started crying bitterly. I comforted her, wiping the tears from her face. I thought to myself,

“Because of the CCP’s arrests and persecution, I haven’t been home in over a decade. My parents have been constantly worried for my safety, especially during my years in prison, during which time they were even more worried about me. Now they’re both in their seventies, and I really don’t want to make them worry for me anymore. Now that I’m back, I want to spend more time with them and fulfill my responsibilities as a son.” A few days later, my uncle came to see me and complained to me, “You haven’t been back in all these years, your mother’s been hospitalized several times and there’s no trace of you, and everyone says you’re a lousy son! Your parents are both very old now, and they’ve been taking care of your child and working the fields for you, and now they’re both ill. You think this has been easy on them? Now that you’re back, you need to spend your days at home living properly and make sure they’re taken care of so that people will stop gossiping about you!” Watching my uncle walk away, I felt a pang of discomfort. I’d really become an ungrateful child in their eyes. I thought that maybe I could just do my duties at the local church, which would allow me to care for my parents. But as I thought this way, I found myself inadvertently sinking into a dark mindset, and so I consciously prayed to God, seeking His intentions. I realized that in my current situation, I couldn’t do my duties at home, that I could be arrested at any time, and that I couldn’t let filial piety stop me from doing my duties. Over these years, I’d enjoyed so much grace and the watering and provision of the truth from God, so I couldn’t lose my conscience now, and I had to do my duties to repay God’s love. So I went out to preach the gospel again.

Yet deep down, my emotional attachment to my mother lingered, and I found myself disturbed in certain situations. The elderly sister of my host home often felt dizzy. One time, she was ill and stayed in the hospital for over ten days. I thought of my mother, “She’s nearly eighty now and has

high blood pressure and heart disease, and she often gets dizzy. What if she falls ill and needs to be hospitalized? As the sayings go, ‘Giving birth isn’t as important as nurturing a child’ and ‘In life, filial piety comes first.’ As their son, I’m not even able to be there for my parents and serve them, won’t my relatives and neighbors say I’m unfilial, ungrateful, and lacking in conscience?” During that time, I couldn’t shake how much I missed and worried about my mother. The image of my mother’s hopeful gaze lingered in my mind, and the mockery of my relatives and neighbors rang in my ears. My heart felt repressed, and I spent my days just going through the motions in my duties, without getting any results. I realized that my state was affecting my ability to do my duties, so I prayed to God to seek help. Later, I read these words of God: **“If you believe that your parents are the closest people in the world to you, that they are your bosses and your leaders, that they are the people who gave birth to you and raised you, who provided you with food, clothes, a home, and transportation, who brought you up, and that they are your benefactors, will it be easy for you to let go of their expectations? (No.) If you believe these things, you will be very likely to approach your parents’ expectations from a fleshly perspective, and it will be hard for you to let go of any of their inappropriate and unreasonable expectations. You will be bound and suppressed by their expectations. Even if you feel dissatisfied and unwilling in your heart, you will not have the power to break free from these expectations, and you will have no choice but to let them take their natural course. Why will you have to let them take their natural course? Because if you were to let go of your parents’ expectations, and to ignore or reject any of their expectations, you would feel that you were an unfilial child, that you were ungrateful, that you’d let your parents down, and that you weren’t a good person. If you take a fleshly**

perspective, you'll do everything you can to utilize your conscience to repay your parents' kindness, to make sure that the suffering your parents endured for your sake wasn't endured for nothing, and you will also want to realize their expectations. You will try hard to accomplish everything they ask you to do, to avoid disappointing them, to do right by them, and you will make the decision to care for them when they're old, to ensure that their last years are happy, and you will even think a little bit further, to handling their funerals, satisfying them at the same time as satisfying your own desire to be a filial child. While living in this world, people are influenced by various kinds of public opinion and social climates, as well as different thoughts and views that are popular in society. If people do not understand the truth, they can only view these things from the perspective of fleshly feelings, and at the same time, they can only handle these things from that perspective"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). What God's words exposed was exactly my state. I'd been viewing things from the perspective of fleshly affection. I believed that everything I had came from my parents, and that as a person, I should be grateful and repay my parents for raising me, that I should strive to meet my parents' demands and expectations, and that this was what a person with conscience should do. My parents divorced when I was young, and many people said I was a pitiful child who would be mistreated by his stepmother, but my stepmother treated me like her own son. In my young heart, she was even closer to me than my biological mother. I felt that she had worked hard and scrimped and saved to raise my brother and I, that she supported my education and helped me start my own family and career, and that she was the person I respected and cherished the most in my life. So I made a secret vow in my heart that I would be good to her and care for her in her old age. My mother

made few demands of me, hoping only that when she and my father grew old, I would care for them and ensure they had someone to rely on. This was my mother's only expectation of me. I thought to myself, "As a person with a conscience, I should do my best to fulfill my parents' wishes, and I should be filial to my parents. If I'm not, I'll be an unfilial and ungrateful person with no conscience, and I'd be deserving of society's condemnation." Because I was performing my duties elsewhere, during holidays and busy farming seasons, I often felt really worried, as I was afraid that my parents would work too hard and fall ill, and so I wanted to return home to help them. I appeared to be doing my duties, but my heart couldn't find peace, and I was just going through the motions in my duties. After I was arrested, the police used my affection toward my parents to tempt me to betray my brothers and sisters, and if it weren't for God's words enlightening and guiding me, I might have betrayed God because of my affection. When I saw the elderly sister from my host home become ill and hospitalized, I was reminded of my mother, and I thought about how weak and ill she was, and how I couldn't go back to care for her. I felt guilty and distressed, and became negative and weak. I quietly harbored grievances against God in my heart, believing that I couldn't meet my parents' expectations or be filial, and that this was all because of my faith in God and my duties. I saw that after so many years of believing in God, I hadn't gained any truth, and that I was still unable to view things according to God's words. Whenever matters involved my family, I'd always find myself governed by my fleshly affection, which meant I still held the views of a nonbeliever. So I prayed for God to enlighten and guide me to understand the truth to solve my problems.

Later, I read these words of God: **"Due to the conditioning of Chinese traditional culture, in Chinese people's traditional notions they**

believe that one must observe filial piety toward their parents. Whoever does not observe filial piety is an unfilial child. These ideas have been instilled in people since childhood, and they are taught in practically every household, as well as in every school and in society at large. When a person's head has been filled with such stuff, they think, 'Filial piety is more important than anything. If I weren't to observe it, I wouldn't be a good person—I'd be an unfilial child and I'd be denounced by society. I'd be a person who lacks conscience.' Is this view correct? People have seen so many truths expressed by God—has God demanded that one show filial piety toward their parents? Is this one of the truths that believers in God must understand? No, it is not. God has only fellowshiped on some principles. By what principle do God's words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. ... Satan uses this kind of traditional culture and notions of morality to bind your thoughts, your mind, and your heart, leaving you unable to accept God's words; you have been possessed by these things of Satan, and rendered incapable of accepting God's words. When you want to practice God's words, these things cause disturbance within you, cause you to oppose the truth and God's requirements, and make you powerless to rid yourself of the yoke of traditional culture. After struggling for a while, you compromise: You prefer to believe traditional notions of morality are correct and in line with the truth, and so you reject or forsake God's words. You do not accept God's

words as the truth and you think nothing of being saved, feeling that you still live in this world, and can only survive by relying on these people. Unable to endure society's recrimination, you would rather choose to give up the truth and God's words, abandoning yourself to traditional notions of morality and the influence of Satan, preferring to offend God and not practice the truth. Is man not pitiful? Do they not have need of God's salvation?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform).

From God's words, I understood that because I'd been influenced by traditional culture since childhood, and also due to the influences of my upbringing, I regarded traditional ideas such as "A kindness received should be gratefully repaid," "Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else," and "Do not travel far while your parents yet live" as principles to comport myself. I saw my parents as my benefactors and as lifelong creditors, and I believed that if I couldn't be filial and allow my parents to enjoy their old age, I would be an unfilial child with no conscience, deserving of society's scorn and condemnation. Under the influence of traditional cultural values, during holidays and busy farming seasons, or when I saw elderly brothers and sisters falling ill and being hospitalized, memories of my parents would flood back to me, and because I couldn't return home to care for my parents, my mood would drop for several days, affecting my performance of my duties. My mother's expectations of me became an emotional debt in my heart that I could never repay. When I was arrested and interrogated by the police, they used sayings like "In life, filial piety comes first" to mislead me, and if it weren't for God's words enlightening and guiding me, I might have succumbed to my fleshly affection and betrayed God. Reflecting on those who betrayed God due to their affection after being arrested, I realized that though they satisfied their families and their fleshly desires,

they lost God's salvation. I saw that without resolving affection issues, one could betray God at any moment. Through my faith in God and my performance of my duties, I came to understand some truths, I came to understand the significance of life, and my corrupt disposition changed a bit. My being able to walk on the right path of life was God's grace. However, instead of being grateful, I harbored grievances against God, thinking that if it weren't for my faith in God and the CCP hunting me down, I wouldn't have to turn my back on my home, and I'd still be able to fulfill my filial duty to my parents. The fact that I couldn't be filial to my parents was clearly due to the CCP's arrests and persecution, and yet I blamed God. I saw that due to Satan's misleading, I was confused and unable to discern right from wrong, and that I was rebelling against and opposing God without even realizing it. Realizing this, I felt deep regret in my heart, and I prayed to God, "God, I know that living in this state is a rebellion against You, and I don't want to live according to these ideas instilled in me by Satan. Please enlighten and guide me to understand the truth and gain discernment."

Then I read these words of God: **"Let's look at the matter of your parents giving birth to you. Who was it that chose for them to give birth to you: you or your parents? Who chose whom? If you look at this from God's perspective, the answer is: neither of you. Neither you nor your parents chose for them to give birth to you. If you look at the root of this matter, this was ordained by God. We'll put this topic to one side for now, as this matter is easy for people to understand. From your perspective, you were passively born to your parents, without having any choice in the matter. From the perspective of your parents, they gave birth to you through their own independent will, right? In other words, putting aside God's ordination, when it comes to the**

matter of giving birth to you, it was your parents who had all the power. They chose to give birth to you, and they called all the shots. You did not choose for them to give birth to you, you were passively born to them, and you didn't have any choice in the matter. So, since your parents had all the power, and they chose to give birth to you, they have an obligation and a responsibility to bring you up, to raise you into an adult, to supply you with an education, with food, clothes, and money—this is their responsibility and obligation, and it is what they ought to do. Whereas you were always passive during the period that they were raising you, you didn't have the right to choose—you had to be raised by them. Because you were young, you didn't have the capacity to raise yourself, you had no choice but to be passively brought up by your parents. You were raised in the way that your parents chose, if they gave you nice food and drinks, then you ate and drank nice food and drinks. If your parents provided you with a living environment where you survived off chaff and wild plants, then you survived off chaff and wild plants. In any case, when you were being raised, you were passive, and your parents were fulfilling their responsibility. It's the same as your parents caring for a flower. Since they want to care for a flower, they should fertilize it, water it, and make sure that it gets sunlight. So, regarding people, no matter whether your parents looked after you meticulously or took great care of you, in any case, they were just fulfilling their responsibility and obligation. Regardless of the reason why they raised you, it was their responsibility—because they gave birth to you, they should take responsibility for you. ... In any case, by raising you your parents are fulfilling a responsibility and an obligation. Raising you into an adult is their obligation and responsibility, and this cannot be called kindness.

If it cannot be called kindness, then is it not something that you ought to enjoy? (It is.) This is a kind of right that you should enjoy. You should be raised by your parents, because before you reach adulthood, the role that you play is that of a child being brought up. Therefore, your parents are just fulfilling a kind of responsibility toward you, and you are just receiving it, but you are certainly not receiving grace or kindness from them” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). From God’s words, I understood that it is God’s sovereign decree for parents to raise their children. Regardless of how much hardship and effort parents put into caring for their children, this is simply their responsibility and obligation, and can’t be considered kindness. Growing up in such a family was also God’s arrangement for me, and no matter how much suffering my parents endured or what kind of price they paid in raising me, they were simply fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations. This had already been predetermined by God, and shouldn’t be regarded as kindness, and I didn’t need to repay them. God arranged for a stepmother to care for and love me, and this was God’s grace, so I should be grateful to God and not attribute all the credit to my parents. But I didn’t understand the truth, and I believed that without my parents, I would have nothing, that it was my mother’s love that changed my unfortunate life. She wasn’t my biological mother but she was even closer to me than my birth mother ever was, so I regarded her as the most important person in my life, and always wanted to repay the debt I owed her for her loving care, but didn’t consider how to do my duties to satisfy God. Was I not utterly lacking in humanity? It’s like when parents hire a nanny, and they entrust their child into her care for a period of time, and the nanny provides the child with everything they need. But if this child recognizes the nanny as their mother, and they only see the nanny’s care and don’t acknowledge everything their parents have

done for them. Wouldn't this break the parents' hearts? Wouldn't this be truly ungrateful and an inversion of that which is and isn't important? My life comes from God, and it is by God's protection and care that I have survived to this day. My parents raising me was merely them fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations, and there is no concept of kindness in this. I shouldn't see my parents as my creditors, but instead I should be grateful and repay God, who is sovereign over all. If I, because of filial piety, don't do my duties before God, then I would truly be an ungrateful wretch with no conscience! Seeking to do the duties of a created being to satisfy God is what makes one worthy as a qualified created being and a person with conscience and reason. If I returned home to care for my parents, even if I were praised by others as a filial son, what would be the significance of this if I didn't receive God's approval?

Later, I came before God again to pray and seek His guidance, asking how I should treat my parents according to the truth principles. Then I read these words of God: **"If, based on your living environment and the context you find yourself in, honoring your parents does not conflict with you completing God's commission and performing your duty—or, in other words, if honoring your parents does not impact your loyal performance of your duty—then you can practice them both at the same time. You do not need to outwardly separate from your parents, and you do not need to outwardly renounce or reject them. In what situation does this apply? (When honoring one's parents does not conflict with the performance of one's duty.) That is right. In other words, if your parents do not try to hinder your belief in God, and they are also believers, and they really support and encourage you to perform your duty loyally and complete God's commission, then your relationship with your parents is not a fleshly relationship between relatives, in the**

regular sense of the word, and it is a relationship between brothers and sisters of the church. In that case, aside from interacting with them as fellow brothers and sisters of the church, you must also fulfill a few of your filial responsibilities to them. You must show them a bit of extra concern. As long as it does not affect the performance of your duty, that is, so long as your heart is not constrained by them, you can call your parents to ask them how they are doing and to show a bit of concern for them, you can help them to resolve a few difficulties and handle some of their life problems, and you can even help them to resolve some of the difficulties they have in terms of their life entry—you can do all of these things. In other words, if your parents do not obstruct your belief in God, you should maintain this relationship with them, and you should fulfill your responsibilities to them. And why should you show concern for them, take care of them, and ask them how they are doing? Because you are their child and you have this relationship with them, you have another kind of responsibility, and because of this responsibility, you must ask after them a little more and provide them with more substantive assistance. So long as it does not affect the performance of your duty, and so long as your parents do not hinder or disturb your faith in God and your performance of your duty, and they do not hold you back either, then it is natural and fitting for you to fulfill your responsibilities to them, and you must do this to the extent where your conscience does not reproach you—this is the lowest standard that you must meet. If you cannot honor your parents at home due to the impact and hindrance of your circumstances, then you do not have to hold to this rule. You should put yourself at the mercy of God's orchestrations and submit to His arrangements, and you do not need to insist on honoring your parents. Does God condemn this? God

does not condemn this; He does not force people to do this. What are we fellowshiping on now? We are fellowshiping about how people should practice when honoring their parents conflicts with the performance of their duty; we are fellowshiping on principles of practice and the truth. You have a responsibility to honor your parents, and if circumstances allow, you can fulfill this responsibility, but you should not be constrained by your feelings. For example, if one of your parents falls ill and has to go to the hospital, and there is no one to take care of them, and you are too busy with your duty to return home, what should you do? At times like these, you cannot be constrained by your feelings. You should give the matter over to prayer, entrust it to God, and put it at the mercy of God's orchestrations. That is the kind of attitude that you should have. If God wants to take the life of your parent, and take them away from you, you should still submit. Some people say: 'Although I have submitted, I still feel miserable and I've been crying about it for days—is this not a fleshly feeling?' This is not a fleshly feeling, it is human kindness, it is possessing humanity, and God does not condemn it. ... If you get trapped by your feelings, and this holds up the performance of your duty, then that completely contravenes God's intentions. God never required you to do that, God only demands that you fulfill your responsibilities to your parents, that is all. That is what it means to have filial piety. When God speaks of 'honoring one's parents' there is a context to it. You just need to fulfill a few responsibilities that can be achieved under all kinds of conditions, that is all. As for whether your parents fall gravely ill or die, are these things up to you to decide? How their lives are, when they die, what disease kills them, or how they die—do these things have anything to do with you? (No.) They have nothing to do with you" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the

Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (4)). After reading God's words, I gained principles and a path of practice. If I can do my duties at home under suitable conditions, I could show filial piety and take care of my parents, but if conditions don't allow me to care for them, God won't condemn me for this. Thinking about it, this wasn't a case of me not wanting to care for my parents, but because I had been arrested by the CCP and was under their close surveillance, if I continued to believe in God and do my duties at home, I would be arrested again and face even more brutal persecution. In the future, if suitable conditions present themselves and there is a chance to return home, I will be filial toward my parents and fellowship God's words with them. But without those conditions, I will still submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements and do my duties well. I should pray to God regarding my parents' health and their care in their old age and entrust these things to Him. God created humanity and arranged the laws of birth, aging, illness, and death, and throughout history, no one has been able to defy this law, nor can anyone escape God's sovereignty and arrangements. It's a normal law that parents develop some illnesses when they age, and this is unavoidable. Besides, even if I stayed by their side, what could I really do? Could I take their place in their suffering? Moreover, I have my younger brother to care for them. Everyone has their own path to walk and their experiences to go through in life, and these can't be replaced or changed by others. My parents' fate is in God's hands, and what I can do is pray for them and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. This is the reason I should possess.

Through this experience, I came to understand that ideas of traditional culture and ancestral heritage that people see as good and right, and which are seen as conforming with popular notions of ethics and morals, aren't the truth, nor are they God's requirements for humanity, and they aren't

standards for human conduct. Only God's words are the truth and should be followed by people. Only by living according to God's words and the truth can a person be truly considered to have conscience and reason. It is God's words that have allowed me to understand how to treat my parents' kindness and no longer be bound or constrained by traditional ideas. Thank God!

23. Reflections on Refusing Supervision

By Li Guo, China

I have been responsible for the cleansing work in the church these past few years. Since I have been doing this duty for quite a long time and have grasped some principles, I usually didn't feel much pressure from my duty and could complete the work with ease. Unconsciously, I started to do duty according to my own whims and work at a leisurely pace. Not long after, the leaders requested a comprehensive investigation to identify individuals who needed to be cleared out. I handed over the name list of the identified individuals to the leaders. Later, they frequently asked me about the specifics of each person on the name list and asked when I could finish sorting out the materials for the clearing out, and so on. Faced with the leaders' supervision and follow-up, I thought, "Aren't I already working on it? I'm not sitting here doing nothing. Don't you trust me? How can supplementing and verifying information be done so quickly? Why are you following up so closely? Can't you give me some freedom?" But then I realized that if I didn't hurry up and get it done, the leaders might say I lacked a burden, so I had no choice but to verify and supplement the information as quickly as possible. After that, I filled my schedule to the brim every day. Doing so made me feel restrained and repressed while doing my duty. Later, when I reported my work, I didn't provide the name list of certain individuals in my investigation. The leaders thought I had almost finished the task and stopped following up and supervising my work as frequently as before. Thus, I lost my sense of urgency. Sometimes, I would delay going to the church to supplement the materials until noon, even though I could obviously have done it in the morning. I didn't have a clear plan either, doing things based on a whim. Later, the leaders found out

that I hadn't reported the name list of some individuals who needed to be cleared out. They pruned me for being willful in my duty, not accepting supervision, and not considering the church's work at all. At that time, I felt very resistant, thinking that I just hadn't reported the complete name list to them, but that didn't mean I was not working on it. Moreover, I hadn't delayed my duty.

Later, I read God's words: **"Antichrists prohibit others from intervening, making inquiries, or supervising them in their work. Whatever arrangements God's house makes to follow up on their work, or learn more about it, or supervise it, they'll employ every kind of technique to thwart and refuse them. By way of example, when some people are assigned a project by the Above, a while goes by without any progress at all. They don't tell the Above whether they're working on it, or how it's going, or whether there have been any intervening difficulties or problems. They give no feedback. Some of the work is urgent and can't be delayed, yet they drag their feet, drawing it out for a long time without finishing the work. The Above must then make inquiries. When the Above does this, those people find the inquiries unbearably embarrassing, and they resist them at heart: 'It's only been ten-odd days since I was assigned this job. I haven't even gotten my bearings yet, and already, the Above's making inquiries. Their requirements of people are just too high!' There they are, looking for faults with the inquiries. What is the problem here? Tell Me, isn't it quite normal for the Above to make inquiries? Part of it is a wish to know more about the state of the work's progress, as well as what difficulties remain to be resolved; in addition to that, it's a wish to know more about what sort of caliber the people they assigned this work to have, and whether they'll actually be able to resolve problems**

and do the job well. The Above wants to know the facts as they are, and most times, they make inquiries in such circumstances. Is that not something they should do? The Above is worried that you don't know how to resolve problems and can't handle the job. That's why they make inquiries. Some people are quite resistant to and repulsed by such inquiries. They're unwilling to let people make inquiries, and so long as people do, they're resistant and have misgivings, always ruminating, 'Why are they always making inquiries and looking to know more? Is it that they don't trust me and look down on me? If they don't trust me, then they shouldn't use me!' They never understand the Above's inquiries and supervision, but resist them. Do people like this have reason? Why don't they permit the Above to make inquiries and supervise them? Why are they resistant and defiant, besides? What's the problem here? They don't care whether their performance of their duty is effective or whether it will hamper the progress of the work. They don't seek the truth principles when doing their duty, but do whatever they want to. They give no thought to the results or efficiency of the work, and no thought at all to the interests of God's house, much less to what God intends and requires. Their thinking is, 'I have my own ways and routines for doing my duty. Don't require too much of me or require things in too much detail. It's well enough that I can do my duty. I can't get too fatigued or suffer too much.' They don't understand the Above's inquiries and attempts to know more about their work. What's missing from this lack of understanding of theirs? Isn't it missing submission? Isn't it missing a sense of responsibility? Loyalty? If they were truly responsible and loyal in doing their duty, would they reject the Above's inquiries into their work? (No.) They'd be able to understand it. If they truly can't understand it, there's only

one possibility: They see their duty as their vocation and their livelihood, and they capitalize on it, regarding the duty they do as a condition and bargaining chip with which to obtain a reward all the while. They'll just do a bit of prestige work to get by with the Above, without any attempt to take God's commission as their duty and their obligation. So, when the Above makes inquiries about their work or supervises it, they go into a repulsed, resistant frame of mind. Is that not so? (It is.) Where does this problem stem from? What is its essence? It's that their attitude toward the work project is mistaken. They think only of fleshly ease and comfort, of their own status and pride, instead of thinking about the effectiveness of the work and the interests of God's house. They don't seek to act according to the truth principles at all" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). God exposes that antichrists don't want to let people supervise their work. When leaders check and inquire into their work, they feel resistant and do things as they want to, not caring about the effectiveness of their work. Reflecting on myself, I had displayed similar behavior. When the leaders asked about my work progress, I felt very resistant, thinking that I hadn't been idle, and that they had been pushing too hard. Although I had continued working afterward, I did so reluctantly. I had even deceived them by not honestly reporting the specifics of the individuals identified in the investigation, making it impossible for the leaders to supervise my work, so that I could do my duty as I pleased according to my own plans. On the surface, I hadn't been idle, but my leisurely attitude of doing things according to routine had directly affected the progress of the work. I realized that I lacked a sense of responsibility in my duty and was not trustworthy.

Later, I read these words of God: **“A leader supervising your work is a good thing. Why? Because it means they are taking responsibility for the church’s work; this is their duty, their responsibility. Being able to fulfill this responsibility proves they are a competent leader, a good leader. If you were given complete freedom and human rights, and you could do whatever you wanted, follow your desires, and enjoy full freedom and democracy, and regardless of what you did or how you did it, the leader did not care or supervise, never questioned you, did not check your work, did not speak up when issues were found, and only either cajoled or negotiated with you, would they be a good leader? Clearly not. Such a leader is harming you. They indulge your evildoing, allowing you to go against principles and do as you wish—they are shoving you toward a pit of fire. This is not a responsible, up-to-standard leader. On the other hand, if a leader is able to regularly supervise you, identify issues in your work and promptly remind or reprove and expose you, and correct and help with your incorrect pursuits and deviations in doing your duty in a timely manner, and, under their supervision, reproof, provision, and help, your wrong attitude toward your duty changes, you are able to discard some absurd views, your own ideas and things arising from impetuosity gradually reduce, and you are able to calmly accept statements and views that are correct and in accordance with the truth principles, isn’t this beneficial for you? The benefits are indeed immense!”** (The Word, Vol.

5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)).

God’s words helped me understand that it is the leaders’ responsibility to supervise and follow up on the work. This also indicates that they are being responsible for their duties and aim to do the church’s work well. People who genuinely have a conscience and reason will frequently self-reflect

when faced with the leaders' supervision, summarizing and correcting deviations and problems in their duties in a timely manner to achieve better results in their duties. I remembered that when I first started to do the cleansing work, I didn't understand any principles. Only after the brothers and sisters fellowshiped and helped me multiple times could I grasp some principles and have some discernment of the behavior of various people. This was a special favor for me to do this duty, and it was God's grace. The church had assigned me to this task, so I should have shouldered this duty and done my best with all my heart and strength to ensure smooth progress in the work. This demonstrates having a conscience and reason. However, I had just been leisurely doing my duty, and satisfied with just having tasks to do, without considering the progress of the work. I had even deceived the leaders by not reporting specific details in order to prevent them from checking and supervising my work. How could I say I had a conscience or humanity by doing my duty in such a manner? I had constantly avoided supervision and not wanted to be restrained. That had made my flesh comfortable but delayed the work, and caused me to commit transgressions. I had been incredibly stupid!

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Just what is duty? It is a commission entrusted by God to people, it is part of the work of God's house, and it is a responsibility and obligation that should be borne by every one of God's chosen people. Is duty your career? Is it a personal family matter? Is it fair to say that once you have been given a duty, this duty becomes your personal business? That is absolutely not the case. So how should you fulfill your duty? By acting in accordance with God's requirements, words, and standards, and by basing your behavior on the truth principles rather than on human subjective desires. Some people say, 'Once a duty has been given to me, is it not**

my own business? My duty is my charge, and is what I am charged with not my own business? If I handle my duty as my own business, doesn't that mean I will do it properly? Would I do it well if I didn't treat it like my own business?' Are these words right or wrong? They are wrong; they are at odds with the truth. Duty is not your own personal business, it is God's business, it is part of God's work, and you must do as God asks; only by performing your duty with a heart of submission to God can you be up to standard. If you always perform your duty according to your own notions and imaginings, and according to your own inclinations, then you will never meet the standard. Only ever performing your duty as you wish is not performing your duty, because what you are doing is not within the scope of God's management, it is not the work of the house of God; you are, instead, running your own operation, carrying out your own tasks, and so this is not remembered by God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ

of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One's Duty Well). From God's words, I understood that duties come from God; they are the responsibility and obligation of every follower of God. It is not like handling household affairs, where people can do things as they like. Instead, they should seek the truth and do their duties according to the principles. I was responsible for the cleansing work in the church. God's requirement on this duty is to cleanse the antichrists, evil people, and disbelievers away from the church as soon as possible, to provide a good church life for the brothers and sisters. However, I had been inconsiderate of God's intentions. I hadn't considered how to swiftly accomplish this work according to the principles. Instead, every day, I had thought about how to make my flesh comfortable and avoid hardship and fatigue. I had done my duty willfully, leisurely and unhurriedly. For tasks that could have been completed earlier,

I hadn't pushed them forward, and I had been unwilling to do more even when I could, and I had intentionally concealed the name list of individuals who met the criteria for clearing out. I had kept the leaders from knowing the specific progress of the work, so that they couldn't supervise me, and so that I wouldn't be too busy or tired. For the sake of fleshly comfort, I had lied and deceived. I was truly unworthy of this duty!

Later, I reflected on myself. Why was I unwilling to accept supervision and always wanted to do things my way? Later, I read this passage of God's words: **"What are people who attend to their proper work like? They are people who regard their basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, and transportation in a simple way. As long as these things are up to a normal standard, that's enough for them. They care more about their path in life, their mission as human beings, their life outlook and values. What do unpromising people ponder about all day? They are always pondering about how to slack off, how to play tricks so that they can shirk responsibility, how to eat well and have fun, how to live in physical ease and comfort, without considering proper matters. Therefore, they feel repressed in the setting and environment of doing their duties in God's house. ... These individuals who do not attend to their proper work and who do as they please do not wish to do these proper things. The ultimate goal that they wish to achieve by doing whatever they want is physical comfort, pleasure, and ease, and to not be restricted or wronged in any way. It is to be able to eat enough of whatever they want, and to do as they please. It is because of the quality of their humanity and their inner pursuits that they often feel repressed. No matter how you fellowship about the truth with them, they will not change, and their repression will not be resolved. That's just the kind of people they are; they are just things that do not attend**

to their proper work. Although on the surface they do not seem to have committed any great evil or to be bad people, and though they appear to have only failed to uphold the principles and regulations, in reality, their nature essence is that they do not attend to their proper work or follow the right path. People like this lack the conscience and reason of normal humanity, and they cannot achieve the intelligence of normal humanity. They do not think about, ponder, or pursue the goals that people with normal humanity ought to pursue, or the life attitudes and methods of existence that people with normal humanity should adopt. Their minds are filled every day with thoughts of how to find physical ease and pleasure. However, in the living environment of the church, they cannot satisfy their physical preferences and so they feel uncomfortable and repressed. That is how these emotions of theirs come about. Tell Me, do people like this not have exhausting lives? (They do.) Are their lives pitiable? (No, they are not pitiable.) That is right, they are not pitiable. To put it lightly, these are the kind of people who do not attend to their proper work. In society, who are the people who do not attend to their proper work? They are idlers, fools, slackers, hooligans, ruffians, and loafers—people like that. They do not wish to learn any new skills or abilities, and they do not want to pursue serious careers or to find a job so that they can get by. They are the idlers and loafers of society. They infiltrate the church, and then they want to get something for nothing, and to obtain their share of blessings. They are opportunists. These opportunists are never willing to do their duties. If things do not go their way, even slightly, they feel repressed. They always wish to live freely, they do not want to perform any kind of work, and yet they still want to eat good food and wear nice clothing, and eat whatever they wish and sleep whenever they want.

They think that when a day like this comes, it will surely be wonderful. They do not want to endure even a little bit of hardship and they wish for a life of indulgence. These people even find living exhausting; they are bound by negative emotions. They often feel tired and confused because they cannot do as they please. They do not want to attend to their proper work or to handle their proper affairs. They do not want to stick to a job and do it constantly from start to finish, treating it as their own profession and duty, as their obligation and responsibility; they do not want to finish it and achieve results, or do it to the best standard possible. They have never thought in that way. They just want to act in a perfunctory manner and to use their duty as a means to make a living. When they face a little pressure or some form of control, or when they are held to a slightly higher standard, or made to shoulder a bit of responsibility, they feel uncomfortable and repressed. These negative emotions arise within them, living feels exhausting to them, and they are miserable. One fundamental reason why living feels exhausting to them is that people like this lack reason. Their reason is impaired, they spend all day indulging in fantasies, living in a dream, in the clouds, always imagining the wildest things. That is why their repression is very difficult to resolve. They are not interested in the truth, they are disbelievers. The only thing we can do is ask them to leave God's house, to return to the world and find their own place of ease and comfort" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (5)). From God's words, I saw that those who do their duties however they please and who do not attend to proper work never think about proper matters. Every day, they think only about how to make their flesh comfortable. No matter how many years they have been doing their duties, they always maintain an attitude of just getting by, no different from idlers

and loafers in the secular world. Such people are averse to the truth and do not love positive things, making them typical disbelievers. If they do not repent, they are doomed to be revealed and eliminated. I used to look down upon idlers and loafers, thinking that those people do not attend to proper work, and instead just mooch about. Comparing myself to God's words, I now saw that I was just like such people. I didn't want to be supervised or urged in my duty; I just wanted freedom and no restraints, showing no responsibility toward my primary work. I didn't attend to proper work and indulged in comfort. Did I have even the slightest sense of integrity and dignity? Although I had appeared to do some work, I had been insincere toward God, being slippery and slacking off in my duty, thinking that I could make the grade by fooling God in order to receive His blessings. I had done some duties only for the sake of my prospects and destination. Was I not an outright opportunist? God scrutinizes everything, and anyone who is insincere in their duties will be revealed and eliminated. I had deluded myself into thinking I could obtain God's blessing through deceitful means. Wasn't that incredibly foolish? How were all my manifestations different from those of the disbelievers who had been cleared out? If I continued this way, I would ruin my own outcome and destination. The more I thought about it, the more scared I became. So I prayed to God to repent, and was willing to seek the truth to solve my problems.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Those who truly believe in God are all individuals who attend to their proper work, they are all willing to perform their duties, capable of shouldering a piece of work and doing it well according to their caliber and the regulations of God's house. Of course, it may be challenging to adapt to this life at first. You may feel physically and mentally exhausted. However, if you truly have**

the resolve to cooperate and the willingness to become a normal and good person, and to achieve salvation, then you must pay a bit of a price and allow God to discipline you. When you have the urge to be willful, you must rebel against it and let go of it, gradually reducing your willfulness and selfish desires. You must seek God's help in crucial matters, at crucial times, and in crucial tasks. If you do have resolve, then you should ask God to chasten and discipline you, and to enlighten you so that you may understand the truth, that way you will get better results. If you genuinely have resolve, and you pray to God in His presence and supplicate to Him, God will act. He will change your state and your thoughts. If the Holy Spirit does a little work, moving you a little, and enlightening you a little, your heart will change, and your state will be transformed. When this transformation occurs, you will feel that living this way is not repressive. Your repressed state and emotions will be transformed and alleviated, and they will be different from before. You will feel that living like this is not tiring. You will find enjoyment performing your duty in the house of God. You will feel that it is good living, comporting yourself, and performing your duty in this way, enduring hardships and paying a price, following the rules, and doing things based on the principles. You will feel that this is the kind of life that normal people should have. When you live by the truth and perform your duty well, you will feel that your heart is steady and at peace, and that your life is meaningful" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (5)). From God's words, I understood that sincere believers in God attend to the proper work, constantly thinking about how to perform their duties well and how to achieve the best results. They are willing to suffer and pay a price, and they can also accept others' supervision. They frequently reflect on the deviations in their work and

promptly correct any issues once discovered. I also understood that by considering the work of God's house more and keeping proper matters in mind, one wouldn't feel depressed or restrained because of a little suffering. After a period of time, I collected information about an evil person. When the leaders found out, they asked when I could have it organized. I thought, "This person has just been transferred to our church from another church. For some of their evil deeds, I need to inquire about and verify it with their previous church, so it won't be easy to compile it. Additionally, I have other materials that need to be supplemented as soon as possible. It seems my flesh will have to endure some suffering again." At that moment, I realized I was considering my flesh again. Reflecting on how I had previously slowed down the work progress, now I knew I couldn't delay again. Moreover, this person had been fomenting disharmony and suppressing the brothers and sisters in the church. This person needed to be cleansed away as soon as possible. I immediately arranged for relevant people to help me understand and verify the information. I soon finished collecting all the necessary details. With the consent of 80% of the brothers and sisters in the church, that evil person was expelled from the church. When I focused on my duty without considering my own flesh, I felt very steadfast in my heart. From then on, when doing my duties, I reported my work in a timely manner. When the leaders supervised and followed up on my work, I no longer felt resistant. Instead, I discovered the deviations in my work through their supervision, and then promptly corrected them. For instance, when asked about the slow work progress, I reflected through our summary and realized that it was mainly due to my inability to prioritize more important tasks. So, I quickly made the correction. When I practiced this way, I no longer felt repressed or resistant. Moreover, the effectiveness of my duty improved significantly, with the volume of the materials sorted out

in one month being twice as much as before. I know all this is the result of God's words, and I feel deeply grateful to God!

24. I Am No Longer Bound by Transgression

By Ma Jie, China

One day in July 2006, I was suddenly arrested on my way to a meeting with my co-workers. That night, I was taken to a secret location for interrogation. The police found receipts for church money on me, and so they took turns interrogating me, pressuring me to give the names of the safekeepers of the church's money and the upper leaders. I didn't answer them, so they whipped me with a leather belt, handcuffed my wrists and hung me up using an iron chain. They tortured me like this for a week. I was thirsty and hungry, and I had no strength left at all. At some point, I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I wasn't sure what they had given me to drink, but there was a strange taste in my mouth; it was choking me, and there were sharp pains all over my body. At that time, my flesh had reached the limit of what it could endure, and I didn't know what they would do to me next. I was very scared; scared that I would be unable to bear the torture and become a Judas, so I prayed earnestly to God in my heart, asking Him to help me stand firm in my witness. Seeing that I had been tormented like this and still hadn't sold out the church's leaders and money, the police changed tact and used familial affection to lure me in, saying, "You haven't been home in a few years. Your family and children must really miss you. Where is the church's money? If you tell us everything, we will let you go home." They also took out some cash and said that they had already found the safekeepers of the church's money. Hearing this, I thought to myself, "Since they've already seized the money, it makes no difference whether I tell them or not. If I tell them something, then I might not be tortured anymore." I told them about one of the families that safekept the church's money, and the police asked me to take them to go collect this money. It

was only then that I realized I'd fallen into their trap. At that time, I had endured all I could take. I thought to myself, "I've already sold out the safekeeping family. If I don't take them there, they'll certainly keep torturing me. What's more, it's been a week since I was arrested, and the church's money may have been moved." In this moment of ill judgment, I led the police to the home of the safekeeper. After the church heard the news of my arrest, they promptly moved the church's money. The brother from the safekeeping family was nearly arrested, but under God's protection, he escaped the police's raid. Because they didn't find the church's money, the police arbitrarily sentenced me to one year and nine months in prison.

Each day I spent in jail was full of suffering and pain, especially when I thought of God's words that said: **"Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). I knew very well that by selling out the brother, I had become a Judas. I had offended God's disposition; I had committed an unforgivable sin. Thinking of this, my heart was in great pain. I had betrayed God; He certainly would not save me. My time of believing in God might have been completely finished. From then on, I was very despondent, and I spent each day in pain. My heart was suffering, and I felt I would be better off dead. I was just waiting for the day I could die and be free. Although I still prayed to God, whenever I thought of my transgression, I felt that God wouldn't want me anymore, and I thought I wasn't worthy of coming before Him. Two years

after I was released from prison, the brothers and sisters found me, and seeing that I had some self-knowledge, they allowed me to resume my church life and arranged a duty for me. I was very touched and thought that God was giving me a chance to repent, and I felt even more like I owed Him. I wept bitter tears while praying to God, “God! I am truly not worthy of coming before You. When facing circumstances, I did not bear any testimony at all. I sold out the brother, becoming a Judas and a mark of shame. Today, You have given me a chance to return to the church and do my duty; I can see Your mercy.” In my heart, I secretly resolved to do my duty diligently, make up for my transgression, and repay God’s love. Later, no matter what duty the church arranged for me, I always eagerly cooperated. No matter how adverse the circumstances I encountered, I did not let these difficulties get me down. I wanted to do my best to make up for my transgression.

One day, I heard that Chen Hua got arrested and became a Judas, selling out many leaders, workers, and safekeeping homes, and was then cleared out from the church. Hearing this news, I immediately thought of my own situation. I had also sold people out, which had almost led to the police seizing the church’s money, and because of this, the safekeeping brother couldn’t return home. I thought that the nature of my selling out the brother was the same as Chen Hua’s; it was a huge stain and God would not forgive my transgression. Now, Chen Hua had been cleared out from the church; maybe one day I would be cleared out and eliminated as well. Thinking of this, I felt very despondent. After that, with any duty the church assigned me, although I would do it, I no longer had the vigor to expend myself for God that I did in the past. Sometimes, when I needed to pay a price and seek the truth principles, I wouldn’t seek them. I would just settle for getting the work done in the prescribed way and performing some labor.

I also didn't consider whether my work was achieving results, relying only on a minimum level of conscience to sustain my duty. I remember that at the time, a sister was afraid of being arrested and didn't dare to do her duty. I knew that I should help and support her, but as I had betrayed God, how was I qualified to give fellowship to others? I was in no mood to ponder how to fellowship to achieve results, and I only went through the motions and spoke a bit of doctrinal knowledge. I knew that approaching my duty with this attitude was not in line with God's intention, and I wanted to strive to turn my state around, but as soon as I thought of how I had committed such a huge transgression and had no hope of being saved, my heart felt weary, and I spent each day aimlessly. When I revealed corrupt dispositions in the performance of my duty, I knew that I should seek the truth to resolve my problem and that doing this would be advantageous to my work and to my life entry, but as soon as I thought of my unforgivable transgression and how I might be cleared out, I just couldn't do it. It was enough for me to just complete my work every day, and I didn't focus on seeking the truth to resolve my state. Later on, I often got headaches, and I had a recurring stomach illness. At the beginning, I would treat my state correctly, but over time, not only did I not recover from my illness, it also got more serious. I wondered if this illness was God's punishment. In the past, I had betrayed God, making Him despise and detest me, and now I had fallen ill. God definitely didn't want me. Sometimes, I produced no results in my duty, and I thought that God was not working on me. It was useless for me to continue pursuing the truth and doing my duty. Whenever I had these thoughts, I got an indescribable upset feeling in my heart. I truly regretted betraying God back then. If I had been able to endure a little longer, would I not have stood firm in my witness? Why did I sell out the brother? I hated myself for caring too much for my flesh and not having a heart that really

wanted God. If I had stood firm in my witness back then, wouldn't I then not have to endure this spiritual torment? The more I thought about it, the more upset I was, and I frequently lived in a state of negativity.

One time, I discussed my state with a sister, and she read me a passage of God's words: **"There is also another cause for people sinking into the emotion of depression, which is that some particular things happen to people before they've come of age or after they've grown into adults, that is, they commit some transgressions or do some idiotic things, foolish things, and ignorant things. They sink into depression because of these transgressions, because of these idiotic and ignorant things they've done. This kind of depression is a condemnation of oneself, and it is also a kind of determination of the kind of person they are. ... Whenever they listen to a sermon or a fellowship on the truth, this depression slowly creeps into their mind and into their innermost heart, and they give themselves a grilling, asking, 'Can I do this? Am I able to pursue the truth? Am I able to attain salvation? What kind of person am I? I did that thing before, I used to be that kind of person. Am I beyond saving? Will God still save me?' Some people can sometimes let go of their emotion of depression and leave it behind. They take their sincerity and all the energy they can muster and apply them to performing their duty, their obligations, and their responsibilities, and can even put all their heart and mind into pursuing the truth and contemplating God's words, and they pour their effort into God's words. The moment some special situation or circumstance comes along, however, the emotion of depression takes hold of them once again and makes them feel incriminated again deep in their heart. They think to themselves, 'You did that thing before, and you were that kind of person. Can you attain salvation? Is there any**

point in practicing the truth? What does God think of what you've done? Will God forgive you for what you've done? Can paying the price in this way now make up for that transgression?' They often reproach themselves and feel incriminated deep inside, and they are always doubting, always grilling themselves with questions. They can never leave this emotion of depression behind them or cast it off, and they feel a perpetual sense of unease about the shameful thing they've done. So, despite having believed in God for so many years, it's as if they've never listened to anything God has said nor understood it. It's as if they don't know whether attaining salvation has anything to do with them, whether they can be absolved and redeemed, or whether they are qualified to receive God's judgment and chastisement and His salvation. They have no idea of all these things. Because they don't receive any answers, and because they don't get any accurate verdict, they feel constantly depressed deep inside. In their innermost heart, they recall what they did over and over again, they replay it in their mind over and over again, remembering how it all began and how it ended, remembering it all from start to finish. Regardless of how they remember it, they always feel sinful, and so they constantly feel depressed about this matter over the years. Even when they're doing their duty, even when they're in charge of a certain job, they still feel like they have no hope of being saved. Therefore, they never squarely face the matter of pursuing the truth and regard it as something most correct and important. They believe that the mistake they've made or the thing they've done in the past are looked poorly upon by most people, or that they may be condemned and despised by people, or even condemned by God. No matter what stage God's work is at or how many utterances He has made, they never face the matter of pursuing

the truth in the correct way. Why is this? They don't have the courage to leave their depression behind. This is the final conclusion this type of person draws from having experienced this kind of thing, and because they don't draw the correct conclusion, they are incapable of leaving their depression behind them" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). These words of God were closely linked to my state. Actually, these few years, whenever I heard that someone was expelled for being a Judas, I would associate this with myself, believing that I had sold out the brother, been a Judas, and transgressed before God; would God still want me after that? Did I still have any hope of being saved? As soon as I thought of this, I would live in negativity. Although I would do my duty on the surface, I did not truly bear a burden on the inside, and I felt even more like pursuing the truth was unrelated to me. I always placed myself outside the ranks of those who pursued the truth. I did not dare to accept God's words of guidance, encouragement, or exhortation, thinking that those words were not spoken for people such as me. I even felt that I was unworthy when making an oath in front of God, and that I was even more unworthy of accepting the judgment and chastisement of His words. Especially when I heard that Chen Hua had been a Judas and was cleared out, I thought that Chen Hua and I were one and the same. I wanted to save my own skin, so I sold out the church's money and the brother, resulting in the brother being hunted and being unable to return home. For the sake of protecting myself, I brought such a grave disaster upon this brother. I was truly too selfish, too lacking in humanity! The nature of my actions was that of Judas. According to what I had done, God could do anything to me. Even if He sent me down to hell, it wouldn't be excessive. But God had not treated me based on my transgression at all, and He gave me a chance to live the church life and do my duty. That I could be alive and do my duty

today was the grace and elevation of God. I should have pursued the truth and resolved my corruption, and repented and done my duty well. However, I was still wrapped up in my transgression, which made me worried about my prospects and destiny. Living in a state of despondency and negativity, I became more and more passive when doing my duty, which not only incurred losses in my work, but also interfered with my life entry. I lost many opportunities to gain the truth. After reading this passage of God's words, I felt that God was speaking with me face-to-face. He does not want people to fall into despondency after committing a transgression; He wants people to be able to self-reflect and continue striving in their pursuit. No matter the time, one must not give up on pursuing the truth. Seeing how real God's love was, I resolved to seek the truth and cast off the shackles of my negative state.

Later on, I read some of God's words: **“People believe in God in order to be blessed, to be rewarded, to be crowned. Doesn't this exist in everyone's heart? It is a fact that it does. Although people don't often talk about it, and even cover up their motive and desire to obtain blessings, this desire and motive deep in people's hearts has always been unshakable. No matter how much spiritual theory people understand, what experiential knowledge they have, what duty they can perform, how much suffering they endure, or how much of a price they pay, they never let go of the motivation for blessings hidden deep in their hearts, and always silently toil in its service. Isn't this the thing buried deepest inside people's hearts? Without this motivation to receive blessings, how would you feel? With what attitude would you perform your duty and follow God? What would become of people if this motivation to receive blessings that is hidden in their hearts was gotten rid of? It is possible that many people would become negative,**

while some would become demotivated in their duties. They would lose interest in their belief in God, as if their soul had vanished. They would appear as if their heart had been snatched away. This is why I say the motivation for blessings is something hidden deep in people's hearts"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). I saw that God exposes how believers in God all have their own underlying motives. It is all for the sake of gaining blessings, and once one's prospects and destiny become involved and they cannot gain blessings, they think that believing in God is meaningless, they live in a state of despondency, and they don't strive upward in their heart. This is man's mistaken pursuit in his belief in God. I reflected on myself based on God's words: Back then, when I had just accepted this stage of God's work, I would expend myself and put in effort in any way to gain blessings. After being arrested, I sold out the brother and succumbed to transgression because I was afraid of enduring hardship and being tormented to death. I thought I would never have another chance to be saved, and I lived in a state of despondency and passed verdict on myself. After getting out of jail, my willingness to accept and submit to whichever duty I did was only to atone for my sins and to gain blessings, and was not true repentance. Once I thought that I could not be saved and that I would not gain blessings, I became so negative that I wasn't in the mood to do my duty. I saw that I had been doing my duty for the sake of gaining blessings, that I had been making a transaction with God. I was just like Paul. Back then, Paul did whatever he could to resist the Lord Jesus, capturing and persecuting the Lord's disciples, and in the end, he was struck down by a bright light. At that time, he only admitted to his sins, and later on, when he preached the gospel for the Lord, it was also for the sake of atoning; neither of these was true repentance and change. He did not know his own essence of resisting God, and when his work

produced some results, he thought that he had capital, to the extent that he openly made a transaction with God, saying, “There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8). He offended God’s disposition, and was cursed and punished by God. Pondering God’s words, I hated myself even more. I had done such a great evil and was still making a transaction with God; I had no reason whatsoever! Even if I didn’t have a good outcome and destination in the future, that would be God’s righteousness. It would be caused by my own evildoing and betrayal of God. The blisters on my feet came from the path I had walked; I had to reap what I had sown. No matter what my outcome might be, I should take my position as a created being and do my duty well; this was the reason and practice that I should possess. I came before God and prayed to Him, “God! I believed in You to gain blessings and rewards, and in forsaking and expending I was making a transaction with You. I have no sense whatsoever! If someone had a dog, that dog would know to repay its owner and keep the home safe. But what about me? You watered and supplied me with so many truths and showed mercy and tolerance toward me, but I made a transaction with You. When I thought I might not have a good destination, I didn’t want to diligently do my duty. I’m even worse than a dog! God, I am willing to repent. No matter what my outcome is in the future, I will loyally do my duty and no longer believe in You for the sake of gaining blessings.”

After this, I read some more of God’s words that brought me some knowledge of His righteous disposition. Almighty God says: **“Most people have transgressed and besmirched themselves in certain ways. For example, some people have resisted God and said blasphemous things; some people have rejected God’s commission and not performed their duty, and were spurned by God; some people have betrayed God when they were faced with temptations; some have betrayed God by signing**

the 'Three Letters' when they were under arrest; some have stolen offerings; some have squandered offerings; some have frequently disturbed the church life and caused harm to God's chosen people; some have formed cliques and handled others roughly, making a shambles of the church; some have often spread notions and death, harming the brothers and sisters; and some have engaged in fornication and promiscuity, and have been a terrible influence. Suffice it to say that everyone has their transgressions and stains. Yet some people are able to accept the truth and repent, while others cannot and would die before repenting. So people should be treated according to their nature essence and their consistent behavior. Those who can repent are those who truly believe in God; but as for the truly unrepentant, those who should be cleared out and expelled will be cleared out and expelled. ... God's handling of each person is based in the actual situations of that person's circumstances and background at the time, as well as in that person's actions and behavior and their nature essence. God will never wrong anyone. This is one side of God's righteousness. ... God's handling of a person is not as simple as people imagine. When His attitude toward a person is one of loathing or revulsion, or when it comes to what this person says in a given context, He has a good understanding of their states. This is because God scrutinizes man's heart and essence. People are always thinking, 'God has only His divinity. He is righteous and brooks no offense from man. He doesn't consider man's difficulties or put Himself in people's shoes. If a person should resist God, He will punish them.' That is not how things are at all. If that is how someone understands His righteousness, His work, and His treatment of people, they are gravely mistaken. God's determination of each person's outcome is not based in man's

notions and imaginings, but in God's righteous disposition. He will repay each person according to what they have done. God is righteous, and sooner or later, He will see to it that all people are convinced, through and through" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading God's words, I understood that God has principles in His treatment of man. He does not determine people's outcome based on a moment of transgression, but rather on the context and nature of people's actions, and whether or not one is able to accept the truth and truly repent; this is God's righteousness. Pondering this, I suddenly saw the light. I saw that there was not only righteous judgment in God's treatment of man, but also mercy. He did not treat people with a one-size-fits-all approach. Thinking back to when I betrayed God because my flesh was weak, I believed that as long as I had done something like this, I would be condemned and eliminated, and no matter how I repented, there was no way for me to be saved. Now, it seemed that I did not understand God's righteous disposition. It's like how both Chen Hua and I sold out the interests of God's house. The church gave me another chance to do my duty, and it was mainly based on the context and nature of my betrayal, measured next to my consistent behavior when doing my duty. Back then, I was tortured by the police for seven days and nights, and my body couldn't take it any longer. I didn't see through Satan's cunning scheme, and in a moment of weakness I betrayed God. It didn't cause great losses, and afterward I was remorseful and loathed myself. This was considered a serious transgression, and God's house gave me a chance to repent. Meanwhile, after Chen Hua was arrested, the police had merely asked her a few questions when she yielded to the abusive power of the great red dragon and sold out many leaders, workers, and homes of those who safekept books, leading to many brothers and sisters being arrested and

causing enormous losses to the church's work. Chen Hua's transgression was not a moment of weakness; she had the essence of a Judas. The church cleared her out based on the nature of her actions and the consequences they brought. This was entirely God's righteousness. Understanding this much, I had some knowledge of God's righteous disposition, and saw that His disposition was beautiful and good. However, I had been on guard against and doubting God, and now I felt even more that I owed Him. I resolved to repent and change, and if I was ever arrested and persecuted again, no matter how much pain my flesh was in, and even if I died, I would stand firm in my witness for God and humiliate Satan, no longer betraying God.

Later, I read another passage of God's words and learned how I should treat my transgression. Almighty God says: **"And how can you be absolved and forgiven by God? This depends on your heart. If you truly confess, truly recognize your mistake and your problem, and whether it be a transgression that you've committed or a sin, you adopt an attitude of true confession, you feel true hatred for what you've done, and you really turn yourself around, so that you will never do that wrong thing again, then, one day, you will receive God's absolution and forgiveness, that is, God will no longer determine your outcome based on the ignorant, foolish, and dirty things you have done before. ... Some people ask, 'How much do I have to pray before I know that God has forgiven me?' When you no longer feel incriminated by this matter, when you no longer slip into depression because of this matter, that is when you will have achieved results, and it will show that God has absolved you. When no one, no power, and no outside force can disturb you, and when you are not constrained by any person, event, or thing, that is when you will have achieved results. This is the first step you need to take. The second step is that, while constantly beseeching**

God for absolution, you should actively seek the principles you should follow as you perform your duty—only by doing this will you be able to perform your duty well. Of course, this is also a practical action, a practical expression and attitude that make up for your transgression, and that proves that you are repentant and that you have turned yourself around; this is something you ought to do. How well do you perform your duty, the commission God gives to you? Do you approach it with a depressed attitude, or with the principles God requires you to follow? Do you offer up your loyalty? On what basis should God absolve you? Have you expressed any repentance? What are you showing to God? If you wish to receive God’s absolution, then you must first be sincere: You must have an attitude of earnest confession on the one hand, and you must also bring your sincerity and perform your duty well, otherwise there’s nothing to talk about. If you can do these two things, if you can move God with your sincerity and good faith, and have God absolve you of your sins, then you will be just like other people. God will look upon you in the same way as He looks upon other people, He will treat you in the same way as He treats other people, and He will judge and chastise, try and refine you just as He does other people—you will be treated no differently. In this way you will not only have the determination and desire to pursue the truth, but God will also enlighten you, guide you, and provide for you in the same way in your pursuit of the truth. Of course, because you now have a sincere and genuine desire and an earnest attitude, God will treat you no differently than anyone else and, just like other people, you will have the chance to attain salvation. You understand this, right? (Yes.)” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). Pondering God’s words, I understood that no matter what past transgressions one has

committed, what God wants is their true repentance and change. If one makes a mistake, they must come before God and sincerely admit to their sins. Next, they must hold onto their duty and do it loyally, using practical actions to make up for their transgressions. It's just like David, who had a prophet sent to speak to him by God, because he committed adultery by sleeping with Uriah's wife. David knew that he had committed a sin, and he admitted it and showed self-remorse to God. He cried enough tears to make the bed in his room float, and when he reached old age, he wouldn't even touch the maiden who warmed his blankets. Additionally, along with deeply regretting, he also used practical action to hold onto his duty, building a holy temple and leading the Israelites to worship Jehovah God. David's attitude toward his transgression was not one of despondency, but rather one of being positive and moving forward. He had true repentance and change. There was also Peter, who denied the Lord three times and lost his testimony. Peter's attitude was not one of despondency, either. Instead, he sincerely admitted to his transgressions before God and had true repentance. In the end, he was crucified upside down for the Lord as a testimony to his love for God. I had to follow the example of David and Peter, confront my transgression with positivity, and let go of my state of despondency, pursuing true repentance and change before God. This is the practice and attitude that I ought to have.

Later, I reflected on why I betrayed God when I was arrested back then. It was because I was too concerned with my flesh and cherished my own life too much. I thought of what the Lord Jesus said: **“For whoever will save his life shall lose it: but whoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it”** (Luke 9:24). Actually, whether I live or die is orchestrated and ruled over by God. Even if I was persecuted by the police to the point of death, as long as I could stand firm in my witness for God,

my death would have value and meaning. Now, I had betrayed God, and although my flesh was not enduring suffering, what I bore was the suffering of my heart. Whenever I thought of how I sold out the brother and the church's money, it was as painful as if my heart had been pierced with a knife. This had become my permanent stain; my never-ending pain. In actuality, fleshly suffering is temporary, and it will pass if you just bear it, but a suffering heart lasts forever. I preserved my flesh but lost all peace and joy; I was living as a walking corpse. I thought of those brothers and sisters in jail who had stood firm in their witness. Although their flesh endured much suffering, and some were even beaten to death by the police, they died for justice. Such a death has value and meaning, and it is approved and remembered by God. I recognized that there was another aspect to why I sold out the church, which was that I didn't discern the cunning scheme of the police. When I heard they say that they had found the church's money, I thought that since they had already seized it, it didn't matter whether I said anything or not. If I spoke up, I wouldn't be tortured anymore. As a result, I lost my testimony. In reality, regardless of whether they had found the church's money, I should have kept my mouth sealed. What God wanted was my loyalty and testimony. Having found the reason for my failure, I made a resolution: In the future, if I was arrested again, I would not sell out the church's interests even if it meant death. Thinking back over the past few years, I had always been avoiding this problem. I was unwilling to face reality and resolve my own issue. Even though I hated myself, I had never truly known myself. I hadn't emerged from my despondency. Under the guidance of God's words, I finally eliminated the estrangement and misunderstandings between God and me. Now, God had graced me with doing the duty of watering newcomers, and I ought to carry out my watering work according to the principles, guide my brothers and

sisters to understand the truth, lay down roots on the true way, and prepare good deeds. Now, I could treat my transgression correctly, and I no longer misunderstood or was on guard against God. I also opened up and fellowshipped about this experience of failure with the brothers and sisters, testifying to God's righteous disposition. When we gathered in small groups, I actively fellowshipped, and when I encountered problems and difficulties in my duty, I could consciously seek the truth and reflect on myself. By practicing for a period of time, I clearly turned around my state, and God was guiding me in the performance of my duty. Seeing that God had not abandoned me due to my transgression and was still leading and guiding me, this made me realize that having transgressions was not the most frightful thing that there was. As long as one sincerely repents and can practice the truth according to the principles, they can obtain God's mercy and guidance. Just as God says: **“God's mercy and tolerance are not rare—man's true repentance is”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). That I am able to have this knowledge and these personal experiences is all due to God's guidance! Glory be to God!

25. God's Words Showed Me a Direction in Life

By Kelsey, Thailand

I've always gotten good grades ever since I was young and would compete in literary and art competitions. You could say I made smooth progress throughout my academic career. My family all hoped I'd distinguish myself and bring honor to our family. They would often say, "Those with knowledge are respected, highly regarded, and only they can gain a footing in society. Those without knowledge and learning are looked down upon and will never be able to hold their head high." I completely agreed with my parent's opinions, and just like that, "standing out above the rest, and bringing honor to your ancestors" became the goal which I sought. To achieve this goal, I would study from morning till night and would persist no matter how tired I felt. In my free time I'd go online to study even more. I would never miss class or arrive late and would closely listen to each of my teachers' lectures. After class, others would go out to play, but I'd stay inside to do homework. I was always one of the last to hand in my tests, making sure to look closely over my answers. In the pursuit of study, I didn't eat at normal hours or do any exercise and I was often underslept. Through tireless effort, I eventually tested into my dream school, Chiang Mai University. When parents, friends and teachers heard the news, they all looked at me with approving and envious gazes. I felt so incredibly happy. I thought that I was embarking on the beginning of a wonderful, remarkable life, that lots of companies would be lining up to hire me when I graduated and I would certainly make a name for myself and stand out above the rest. Unexpectedly, my mother got cancer and was diagnosed at a late stage. The doctors said she had very little time left. The news was like a bolt from the blue and completely overwhelmed me. It

seemed like everything I'd planned had been torn to shreds. I had worked so hard in school so that I could become a standout in the future, have the means to support my mom in the future and make her proud. But my mom had gotten cancer before I even graduated. I felt so depressed. I wanted to go home and take care of my mom, but I thought of how much work I'd put into testing into university and that I ought to have something to show for all the effort I'd put in for years. If I abandoned my schooling to take care of my mom, wouldn't all my hard work have been in vain? I felt so conflicted and didn't know how to proceed. One time, my mom called me and said, "I don't think I'll make it to when you graduate, but for the sake of your own future, you must complete your schooling and go on to live a good life, then I can pass without any regrets." Having been convinced by mom, I didn't return home to take care of her and continued my studies. Not soon after that, my mother passed away. I was consumed by recollections of my mother, and all I could think of was the task she entrusted me with. I resolved to study hard and make a name for myself to live up to my mother's hopes.

At first I managed to adapt to life at university, but eventually I came to see that life there was rather dry and boring, it was nothing like how I had imagined. To the contrary, life at school was full of competition. Students formed cliques based on their family backgrounds, and there was a lot of teasing and ridicule. Some teachers would even join along with students with good grades or family backgrounds to tease those with bad grades or poor families. This led students who already felt inferior to become even more so, and some students even transferred or withdrew. I utterly despised the atmosphere there, but in order to distinguish myself, I stubbornly persevered in my studies to attain good grades. Through hard work, I attained good grades and results both in school and in my

professional career. Under-classmates all looked up to me, and took me as a role model to emulate in their studies. I got the fame and gain I had desired, but I felt empty within, and I gradually came to be bored and fed up with that lifestyle. I didn't understand why people wanted to live that way. I had thought that by studying knowledge I could stand out, attain happiness and lead the life I wanted to live. So why did I feel more empty and agonized the more I sought that life? Sometimes I'd think: Was the purpose of life to just work to experience the feeling of success and then eventually die? And given that we take nothing to our graves and have nothing to show for our efforts, what was the point of all this? Were there no more meaningful ways of living?

One day I saw a post on Facebook about the true meaning of life. After liking the post and leaving a comment, I got friended by someone that began chatting with me about religious faith, which was when I realized that he must be a Christian. He preached the gospel of Almighty God's last days' work of salvation to me. I read many of Almighty God's words and came to know many truths I had never heard before, including the source of man's life, the root of man's suffering, and methods by which Satan corrupts mankind, etc. God's words slaked my thirst for life's truths. I had never heard any of these truths in school. After that, I came across this passage of Almighty God's words on Facebook: **"Since mankind's contrivance of the social sciences, the mind of man has become occupied by science and knowledge. Science and knowledge then have become tools for the ruling of mankind, and there is no longer sufficient room for man to worship God, and no more favorable conditions for the worship of God. The position of God has sunk ever lower in the heart of man. Without God in his heart, man's inner world is dark, hopeless and empty. Subsequently many social scientists,**

historians, and politicians have come to the fore to express theories of social science, the theory of human evolution, and other theories that contradict the truth that God created man, to fill the hearts and minds of mankind. And in this way, those who believe that God created everything have become ever fewer, and those who believe in the theory of evolution have become ever greater in number. More and more people treat the records of the work of God and His words during the age of the Old Testament as myths and legends. In their hearts, people become indifferent to the dignity and greatness of God, to the tenet that God exists and holds dominion over all things. The survival of mankind and the fate of countries and nations are no longer important to them, and man lives in a hollow world concerned only with eating, drinking, and the pursuit of pleasure. ...” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). After reading this passage of God’s words, I realized that because men’s hearts are consumed with science and knowledge, leaving no place for God, they become increasingly empty. So they seek to investigate what is the purpose of life, what value is there in life and what is life’s meaning, but the more one tries to use science and knowledge to investigate these issues, the less one obtains real answers. This knowledge only gives people a temporary sense of consolation, because science and knowledge are not the truth and cannot provide a true supply of life. Before, I had always believed that the more knowledgeable someone was, the more insight they would have into life and the more realizations they’d have about things, and that because those that sought knowledge were well thought of, they lived a life of value and could attain more happiness. But after studying so much knowledge, I still didn’t know what the purpose of life was, where man came from, what his destination was, and I hadn’t attained the happiness I sought. Even when Iaced my

tests, ranked first in my class and was admired by all, I still felt empty and agonized inside, and the difficulties I faced had not been resolved. I saw how the other university students would try to fill in the emptiness by going shopping, singing karaoke, going out to bars and attending concerts held by famous singers. At first, I also had fun while seeking after these trends with them, but afterward I would feel even more empty. Only after reading God's words did I realize that man's spiritual emptiness stems from straying away from God and not having a place for Him in their hearts. Science and knowledge lead people to deny that God created man. Not only do they not know or acknowledge they came from God, they also conclude that God's words and work are just legends or myths. As such, God loses His place in people's hearts and they become ever more distant from Him. How could they not feel empty given they do not know God and do not have Him and His words in their hearts? My life comes from God. All that has happened in my life has resulted from God's arrangements. As a created being, I must follow and worship God to have a better fate. After that, I accepted God's last days' work and it felt as if I was finally coming home. Later on, after attending gatherings for a while, I felt more and more spiritually fulfilled, enjoyed myself much more and felt peaceful and joyful.

One time after a gathering, I still wanted to read more of Almighty God's words, so I went on the GOSPEL OF THE DESCENT OF THE KINGDOM website to look for books of God's words. On the website, I found two passages describing how Satan corrupts mankind. God says: **"Once someone is mired in fame and gain, they no longer seek that which is bright, that which is just, or those things that are beautiful and good. This is because the seductive power that fame and gain have over people is too great; they become things for people to pursue throughout their lives and even for all eternity without end. Is this not true? Some**

people will say that learning knowledge is nothing more than reading books or learning a few things that they do not already know so as not to lag behind the times or be left behind by the world. Knowledge is only learned so they can put food on the table, for their own future, or to provide the basic necessities. Is there any person who would endure a decade of hard study just for the basic necessities, just to resolve the issue of food? No, there are none like this. So why does a person suffer these hardships for all these years? It is for fame and gain. Fame and gain are waiting for them in the distance, beckoning them, and they believe that only through their own diligence, hardships and struggles can they follow the road that will lead them to attain fame and gain. Such a person must suffer these hardships for their own future path, for their future enjoyment and to gain a better life” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). “Satan uses fame and gain to control man’s thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan’s fame and gain. Looking now at Satan’s actions, are its sinister motives not utterly detestable? Maybe today you still cannot see through Satan’s sinister motives because you think one cannot live without fame and gain. You think that if people leave fame and gain

behind, they will no longer be able to see the way ahead, no longer be able to see their goals, that their futures will become dark, dim and gloomy” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). Through reading these words of God, I saw that people are fettered by their seeking of fame and gain. They believe that the pursuit of fame and gain is man’s motivation and the goal of life. They do not know that this is a mistaken path and they don’t have the courage or the ability to break free from it. I thought of how my own life goal was to stand out and bring honor to my ancestors, how I thought those who achieved such goals were life’s winners. These ideas had been instilled in me while I was still in school. To achieve my goals, I had buried myself in studies for years, studied knowledge and sought after an advanced degree, so that I could ultimately land a good job, lead a good life and enjoy a better living standard. I was particularly influenced by one of my mom’s common refrains: “One must endure the greatest hardships in order to become the greatest of men.” I believed that in order to stand out and come out on top, I had to struggle and bear hardships and that all the hardships would be worthwhile. In my pursuit of fame and gain, I paid no attention to the outside world, was completely consumed by my studies, and even when my mother fell deathly ill, I didn’t leave school to take care of her, worrying doing so would influence my studies. I had spent more than ten years pursuing fame and gain, and had never once stopped to think if it was really worth it to do so. Despite earning the respect and admiration of my peers, I didn’t feel truly happy. Quite the opposite, I became increasingly selfish, arrogant and disparaging of others. I particularly looked down on average people that only concerned themselves with making a living. Outwardly, I didn’t express such feelings, but inside I disparaged them. I realized I was walking the wrong path and had wasted so much time. Ultimately, I had failed to attain the life of

happiness and value I had imagined. Through God's revelation I realized that Satan uses fame and gain to tempt and corrupt people. Seeking fame and gain led me to a life of suffering and left me with nothing. Hadn't I fallen for Satan's treacherous plot? I knew I was going down the wrong path and should not pursue fame, gain and status, but rather should follow God and walk the path of pursuing the truth. But I also thought of how hard I'd worked all those years and was only one step away from graduating and attaining my advanced degree, which would earn me respect in society. Later on, when I went to work, I could say I had graduated from such and such university and could carry myself with dignity. I didn't have the faith to abandon my studies and wanted to pursue a master's and Ph.D.

One time while doing my duty, a sister asked me what my plans were for the future. I said, "I want to pursue a master's and Ph.D. but I'm having some doubts. If I pursue advanced studies, I'll have to spend even more time on academics and will have less time to do my duty. I am seeking to find out if pursuing these studies is the right thing to do." My sister read two passages of God's words for me: **"Peter was born into an ordinary Jewish farming household. His parents supported the entire family by farming, and he was the eldest of the children, with four brothers and sisters. This, of course, is not the main part of our story; Peter is our central character. When he was five years old, Peter's parents started teaching him to read. At that time, the Jewish people were quite erudite, and were especially advanced in such areas as agriculture, industry, and commerce. As a result of their social environment, both of Peter's parents had received higher education. Despite being from the countryside, they were well-educated and comparable to the average university students of today. Evidently, Peter was blessed to have been born into such favorable social conditions. Clever and quick**

on the uptake, he readily assimilated new ideas. After beginning his studies, he figured things out very easily during lessons. His parents were proud to have such a bright son, and made every effort to allow him to go to school, hoping that he would be able to distinguish himself and secure some sort of official post in society. Without realizing it, Peter had become interested in God, which meant that, at fourteen, when he was in high school, he felt averse toward the curriculum of Ancient Greek Culture he was studying, especially with regard to the fictional people and made-up events in ancient Greek history. From then on, Peter—who had just entered the springtime of his youth—started trying to find out more about the human life and the wider world. His conscience did not compel him to repay the pains his parents had taken, because he clearly saw that people were all living in a state of self-deception, they were all living within meaningless lives, ruining their own lives in their struggle for wealth and recognition. His insight was largely to do with the social environment he inhabited. The more knowledge people have, the more complex their interpersonal relationships and internal worlds are, and therefore the more they exist in a void. Under these circumstances, Peter spent his free time making wide-ranging visits, most of which were to religious figures. In his heart, there seemed the vague feeling that religion might be able to account for all that was inexplicable in the human world, and so he would often go to a nearby synagogue to attend services. His parents were unaware of this, and before long Peter, who had always been of good character and fine scholarship, began to hate going to school. Under the supervision of his parents, he barely completed high school. Swimming ashore from the ocean of knowledge, he took a deep breath; from then on, no one would educate or restrict him any longer” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of “God’s Words to the Entire Universe,” On the Life of Peter). **“Throughout his life, Peter fished for a living but, more than that, he lived to preach. In his later years, he wrote the first and second epistles of Peter, as well as several letters to the church of Philadelphia of that time. The people of this period were profoundly touched by him. Instead of lecturing people using his own credentials, he provided them with a suitable supply of life. He never forgot Jesus’ teachings before He left, and was inspired by them throughout his life. While following Jesus, he resolved to repay the Lord’s love with his death and to follow His example in all things. Jesus agreed to this, so when Peter was 53 years old (more than 20 years after Jesus’ departure), Jesus appeared to him to help fulfill his aspiration. In the seven years following that, Peter spent his life getting to know himself. One day, at the end of these seven years, he was crucified upside down, thus bringing his extraordinary life to an end”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of “God’s Words to the Entire Universe,” On the Life of Peter). After hearing these two passages, I saw that my own situation was much like when Peter became tired of the empty knowledge he learned in school. He knew that there was no life in knowledge and that the school and society were full of conflict. So he walked away from his studies and began a life of pursuing the truth and life. I saw that Peter had the resolve to walk away from his schooling and society, didn’t care at all how others would judge him, didn’t get bogged down in his affections, but just had firm resolve and personal belief and wasn’t influenced by current trends. He was brave enough to make a change from living in the old way that so many lived in order to seek positive things. It was quite incredible that Peter was able to make that kind of decision in that era, it took an incredible amount of faith. God’s words had a

great impact on me. Outwardly, it may have seemed like Peter hadn't attained any reputation or profit, but he had gained God's commendation. I realized that pursuing the truth and doing one's duty as a created being like Peter, practicing according to God's words, living out the truth reality, and knowing and submitting to God were the elements of a truly valuable and meaningful life. I thought about my diligent efforts in my studies: After finishing high school I attended university and was now considering pursuing a master's degree. Was I not setting ever higher goals just to stand out and distinguish myself? Was this a meaningful pursuit? I thought of how my mom had studied hard from a young age to stand out and rise to the top, had labored diligently in her vocation, and finally come out on top at thirty, rising above past hardships, enjoyed improved material conditions, and attained fame, gain and the respect of others. From the outside, she seemed quite honorable, but in the end, she got cancer and passed away. Her fame and gain could not save her from sickness. I realized that seeking fame and gain has no value or meaning.

Later on, I read another two passages of God's words, that allowed me to realize even more what path I should choose. Almighty God says: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. If you do not worship God but live within your filthy flesh, then are you not just a beast in human attire? Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. In this world, man wears the devil's clothing, eats food from the devil, and works and serves under the devil's thumb, becoming completely trampled in its filth. If you do not grasp the meaning of life or obtain the true way, then what significance is there in living like**

this? You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)).

“Young people should not be without aspirations, drive, and an enthusiastic desire to better themselves; they should not be disheartened about their prospects, and nor should they lose hope in life or confidence in the future; they should have the perseverance to continue along the way of truth that they have now chosen—to realize their wish to expend their entire lives for Me. They should not be without the truth, nor should they harbor hypocrisy and unrighteousness—they should stand firm in the proper stance. They should not just drift along, but should have the spirit to dare to make sacrifices and to struggle for justice and truth. Young people should have the bravery to not succumb to oppression by the forces of darkness and to transform the significance of their existence. Young people should not resign themselves to adversity, but should be open and frank, with a spirit of forgiveness for their brothers and sisters. Of course, these are My requirements of everyone, and My advice to everyone. But even more, these are My soothing words for all young people. You should practice according to My words. In particular, young people should not be without the resolve to exercise discernment in issues and to seek justice and the truth. You should pursue all things beautiful and good, and you should obtain the reality of all positive things. You should be responsible toward your life, and you must not take it lightly. People come to the earth and it is rare to encounter Me, and it is also rare to have the opportunity to seek and to gain the truth. Why would you not prize this beautiful time as the right path to pursue

in this life?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Words for the Young and the Old). God’s words gave me a new understanding of life. Man should not live to seek fame and gain, but should worship God, pursue the truth and expend himself for God. This is what constitutes a valuable and meaningful life. As created beings, even if we attain fame, gain and the respect of others, if we do not worship God and fulfill our duties as created beings, we will have lived in vain. Despite at first claiming that I was willing to follow God, make renunciations and expend myself, I didn’t actually put any of that into practice. I still sought the comforts of flesh, good future prospects and the respect of others. I still hadn’t understood the true meaning and value of man’s life. I thought of how it was a blessing and by the grace of God that I was born in the last days and had accepted God’s work at such a young age. God had arranged for me to grow up in this advantageous environment in which I’d learned to speak many languages, including Chinese, allowing me to read God’s words and put my skills to use in my duty. My age, background and language abilities were all well-suited to pursuing the truth and doing my duties. If I single-mindedly sought fame, gain and status, and attained both fame and gain but lost my opportunity to follow God and pursue the truth, what meaning would there be in that attainment? Nothing in this world compares to the attainment of truth, and there is no comparison between a life deemed good by people versus a life commended by the Creator. Only a life that is commended by God is meaningful and valuable. Having realized this, I gained the resolution to pursue the truth and submit to and satisfy God. I was also willing to forego university to expend myself for God. I prayed to God and said I must break free from this boring, dry lifestyle, that I must pursue the truth, follow God and walk the right path. Later on, I called my advisor, told him I was planning to withdraw and asked him to sign off on my withdrawal

application. However, not only did he not agree to sign, he also said, “You’ve only got one more year left before you graduate, wouldn’t it be a shame to quit now? You’re clearly aware that salaries for college graduates are much higher than those for non-college graduates. Without a college degree, you might even have trouble finding a job; people won’t look at you the same way. If you have an issue, you can defer study for a year and then come back once things are resolved. Isn’t that a better option?” After hearing my advisor’s advice, I felt a bit conflicted. I thought maybe I should defer like he’d said and then I could come back later. That way, I could graduate, get my degree and would be able to find a good job and be respected later on. But I also thought that this might be Satan’s treacherous plot. Satan didn’t want me to follow God and do my duty, so it used fame and gain to tempt me. I thought of God’s words which say: **“When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to mislead the person and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to obstruct God, using various wicked ploys to tempt, disturb and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God”**

(The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). If I abandoned my studies to follow God, I would have more time to pursue the truth and do my duty, but my advisor had said certain things to try to tempt me. Outwardly, it seemed like he was looking out for me, but Satan’s treacherous plot was working in the background. Satan wanted to tempt me to continue seeking fame, gain and status and become mired in my pursuit

of fame and gain. I couldn't fall for Satan's trick. Realizing this, I responded to my advisor, saying, "I understand what you mean, but I'm even more clear now about God's urgent intention. I have thought long and hard about choosing this path of faith and I've already made up my mind. I will devote my life to faith, following God, expending myself for Him, and will never return to pursue studies. I have decided to withdraw, I hope you can understand me." Seeing that I'd made up my mind, the advisor didn't try to convince me anymore, and signed the papers for my withdrawal.

After withdrawing, I had much more time and energy to do my duty, and I became much more focused and quiet before God. I also had more time to ponder God's words, fellowship the truth with brothers and sisters and do my duty. I felt I was growing ever closer to God. It has now been almost a year and a half. While doing my duty, I revealed my corrupt dispositions, but through this, I learned how to work harmoniously with others, and when I encountered issues, I wouldn't get bogged down in them and would seek the truth to resolve them. I gained so much during this past year. If I had waited another year to start doing my duty, I would have missed so many opportunities to attain the truth, which would have been a major loss for me. I also have seen that world catastrophes are growing increasingly severe. Ukraine and Russia are at war, major conflicts have arisen throughout the world, the pandemic intensified, and earthquakes and floods are becoming more frequent. I thought of how when the calamities come, even if I had gotten my degree and attained fame, gain and respect, it would all be meaningless if I didn't have life. Just like the Lord Jesus said: **"What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"** (Luke 9:25). I must believe in God and follow Him wholeheartedly, that way I can attain the truth and life. This is the most valuable thing in the world and the highest blessing! My decision to forego

schooling to follow God and do my duty as a created being is the best decision I've ever made! Thanks be to God for His guidance!

26. A Painful Lesson From Craving Comfort

By Li Yi, China

In late 2017, I was elected as a church leader. I felt a little under pressure because I had never done this duty before, but I knew that my being able to take on this duty was God exalting and gracing me, so I was willing to take on this role. In the beginning, when brothers and sisters encountered problems, I relied on God and sought the truth principles to resolve them. Sometimes I'd work late into the night and still not feel it was hard or exhausting. After a while, various items of the church work saw some improvement, and I came to grasp some of the principles related to this duty, which relieved some of the pressure I'd been feeling.

The years flew by, and by March 2021, the workload had grown due to the increased number of members in the church, and I started to feel under pressure. Sister Jing Yuan, who was cooperating with me at the time, was a newcomer, and she wasn't good at work yet and tended to become negative when confronted by difficulties, so most of the church work fell on me. At first, I could approach things correctly, thinking that since Jing Yuan had only been a believer for a short time and couldn't handle the work, it was fine for me to do more. During the day, I was busy with gatherings to implement work and solving brothers' and sisters' problems. When I got home at night, I also had to summarize the deviations and problems in the work. After doing this for a long time, I came to feel that being a leader was too hard and tiring, and that I didn't have any free time. I was in poor health, I had had cancer before and had only been in recovery for a few years, and the doctor had told me to get plenty of rest. I thought to myself, "I'm so busy every day; if I keep exhausting myself like this, won't my illness come back? If that happens, not only would my body suffer, but I

might also die.” Thinking of this, I felt very worried, and didn’t want to do my duty as a leader anymore. I wanted to switch to an easier duty to give myself a little more time to rest. There were many times when I wanted to write my letter of resignation. Whenever I had this thought, I felt a little guilty. The church didn’t have anyone suitable to be a leader, so what would happen to the church’s work if I resigned? Later, I went to implement the gospel work, and found that the brothers and sisters had many wrong viewpoints hindering them. At first, I could put effort into fellowshiping and resolving things, but after a while, the results of the gospel work were still poor. Whenever I thought about the time and effort I’d have to put into summarizing deviations and solving problems, and how I’d have to continue to follow up on and resolve any issues the potential gospel recipients had, and just how much work there was to do, I’d feel tired. I thought, “I already have a lot of work to do. How am I supposed to manage it all? What if my body breaks down? My body belongs to me, I’ve got to take it easy, I can’t wear myself out like this.” So, every time I met with the brothers and sisters, I’d just briefly ask if there were any potential gospel recipients to preach to, and then I’d say a few words of doctrine and leave. Not long after, the upper leadership sent a letter, saying that the reason the gospel work wasn’t getting results must have been because the leader wasn’t doing actual work. I felt kind of upset, thinking, “The gospel work is my responsibility, and the lack of results is directly related to me.” I also felt a bit repressed, thinking it would be better to do a single-faceted task, like watering the church’s newcomers, that way I could relax a little and not tire myself out so much. Being a leader was such hard work, and if the job wasn’t done well, I had to take responsibility. I felt I should just admit responsibility and resign. So, when I met with the upper leader, I complained about my difficulties and hardships, saying that I lacked the

caliber required to do this duty, and that my occupying a leadership position was delaying the brothers' and sisters' life entry and impacting the church's work, and that this was committing evil. The leader didn't accept my resignation, and offered me fellowship and help instead. I realized that I didn't lack caliber, but rather that I was too concerned about my own flesh. And whenever I thought of having to undergo physical suffering, I still feared my body would collapse, and wondered what would happen if my old condition returned and I died. Though I appeared to be doing my duties, I was in pain and felt repressed. Later, the sister in charge of the gospel work said to me, "The poor results of the gospel work in your church are directly related to you." I didn't reflect on myself, and came up with excuses and justifications instead, saying that I lacked caliber and couldn't handle the work. After that, I continued to be passive in my duty.

One day, in June 2021, I was arrested by the police during a gathering. At that moment, I clearly realized that this was God chastening me. I had always been passive in my duty, always concerned about my flesh and wanting to resign, not wanting to do the duty of a leader, and now I had lost my chance to do my duty. I felt that God had used this situation to revoke my qualification to do my duty, and my heart was filled with torment. Later, due to God's protection, I was quickly released. To avoid being surveilled and arrested by the police, I had to go into hiding for a while and couldn't go out to do my duty. I was in great pain and felt very negative, wondering if this situation meant that God was revealing me and didn't want me anymore. Later, I read a passage of God's word and understood God's intention. God says: **"At times, God uses a certain matter to reveal you or discipline you. Does this then mean that you have been eliminated? Does it mean your end has come? No. ... In fact, in many cases, people's concern stems from their own self-interest. Speaking generally,**

it is the fear that they will have no outcome. They're always thinking, 'What if God reveals me, eliminates me, and rejects me?' This is your misinterpretation of God; these are only your one-sided conjectures. You have to figure out what God's intention is. When He reveals people, it is not for the sake of eliminating them. People are revealed in order to expose their shortcomings, mistakes, and their nature essences, to make them know themselves and become capable of true repentance; for this reason, revealing people is in order to help their lives to grow. Without a pure understanding, people are apt to misinterpret God and become negative and weak. They may even give in to despair. In fact, being revealed by God doesn't necessarily mean that you will be eliminated. It is to help you get to know your own corruption, and to make you repent. Oftentimes, because people are rebellious, and do not seek to find resolution in the truth when they reveal corruption, God must exercise discipline. And so, sometimes, He reveals people, exposing their ugliness and pitifulness, getting them to know themselves, which helps their life to grow. Revealing people has two different implications: For the evil people, being revealed means they are eliminated. For those who are able to accept the truth, it is a reminder and a warning; they are made to reflect on themselves, to see their true state, and to stop being wayward and reckless, because to carry on like this would be dangerous. Revealing people in this way is to remind them lest, in performing their duty, they grow muddleheaded and careless, fail to take things seriously, become satisfied with only a few results, and think they have performed their duty to an acceptable standard when, in fact, measured by God's demands, they have fallen far short, and yet they are still complacent and believe themselves to be doing fine. In such circumstances, God will discipline, caution, and

remind people. Sometimes, God reveals their ugliness—which is patently to serve as a reminder. At such times you should reflect on yourself: Performing your duty like this is inadequate, there is rebelliousness within you, there are too many negative elements, everything you do is perfunctory, and if you still do not repent, by rights you should be punished. Now and then, when God disciplines you, or reveals you, this does not necessarily mean you will be eliminated. This matter should be approached correctly. Even if you are eliminated, you should accept it and submit to it, and make haste to reflect and repent” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth and Submitting to God Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). God’s words dispelled my misunderstanding of Him. I had thought that being arrested and losing my duty was God using this situation to reveal and eliminate me, but in fact, this situation was God reminding and warning me, and it prompted me to reflect on myself. I’d always complained about difficulties and hardships and craved comfort instead of doing actual work in my duty, which only hindered the work. If this situation hadn’t happened to me, I wouldn’t have reflected on myself and would have continued to treat my duty lightly. This would have caused irreparable losses to the work and angered God, which would have definitely resulted in me being eliminated. I knew that I should thoroughly reflect on myself and truly repent, as this was in alignment with God’s intention. I could no longer misunderstand God. So I began to reflect, and prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to learn a lesson from this matter.

Later, I read these words of God: **“When doing a duty, people always pick light work, work that isn’t tiring, and that does not involve braving the elements outdoors. This is picking easy jobs and shirking hard ones, and it is a manifestation of coveting the comforts of the**

flesh. What else? (Always complaining when their duty is a little hard, a little tiring, when it involves paying a price.) (Being preoccupied with food and clothing, and the pleasures of the flesh.) **These are all manifestations of coveting the comforts of the flesh. When such a person sees that a task is too laborious or risky, they foist it off on someone else; they themselves only do leisurely work, and they make excuses, saying that they are of poor caliber, that they lack work ability, and cannot take on this task—when in fact, it is because they covet the comforts of the flesh. They do not wish to suffer, regardless of what work they do or what duty they perform. ... There's also when people always complain about difficulties while doing their duty, when they don't want to put any effort in, when, as soon as they have a little downtime, they take a rest, chatter idly, or partake in leisure and entertainment. And when work picks up and it breaks the rhythm and routine of their lives, they are unhappy and dissatisfied with it. They grumble and complain, and they become perfunctory in doing their duty. This is coveting the comforts of the flesh, is it not? ... No matter how busy the work of the church is or how busy their duties are, the routine and normal condition of their lives is never disrupted. They are never careless about any small details of the life of the flesh and control them perfectly, being very strict and serious. But, when dealing with the work of God's house, no matter how great the matter and even if it might involve the safety of the brothers and sisters, they deal with it carelessly. They do not even care about those things that involve God's commission or the duty they should do. They take no responsibility. This is indulging in the comforts of the flesh, is it not? Are people who indulge in the comforts of the flesh suitable for doing a duty? As soon as someone brings up the subject of doing their duty, or talks about**

paying a price and suffering hardship, they keep shaking their heads. They have too many problems, they are full of complaints, and they are filled with negativity. Such people are useless, they are not qualified to do their duty, and should be eliminated” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). **“This is because the thing that most perceptibly reflects the bond that links you to God is how you treat the matters God entrusts to you and the duty He assigns you, and the attitude you have. What is most observable and most practical is this issue. God is waiting; He wants to see your attitude. At this crucial juncture, you should hurry and make your position known to God, accept His commission, and perform your duty well. When you have grasped this crucial point and fulfilled the commission God has given to you, your relationship with God will be normal. If, when God entrusts a task to you, or tells you to perform a certain duty, your attitude is cursory and apathetic, and you do not take it seriously, is this not precisely the opposite of giving all your heart and strength? Can you perform your duty well in this way? Certainly not. You will not perform your duty adequately. So, your attitude when performing your duty is of crucial importance, as are the method and path you choose. No matter how many years they have believed in God, those who fail to perform their duties well will be eliminated”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reflecting on God’s words, I felt as if my heart had been pierced, as if God were standing before me and judging me. God entrusts people with commissions in the hope that they can complete them with all their heart and strength, but I had had such a dismissive attitude toward my duty, and I didn’t fulfill my responsibilities at all. When my duties became somewhat hectic or there were difficulties that required me to put in thought or pay a price, I craved comfort and

complained, unwilling to endure hardship or pay a price. I even wanted to resign and shirk my duties. I thought back to when I first took on the duty of a church leader. Although there was a lot of work to do, I relied on God and paid a real price, and God guided me, and the work made some progress. Later, as the number of church members increased, there was more work to be done, and the sister I was working with was still a newcomer, so most of the church's work needed my personal involvement. I was busy day and night, and I felt that I was suffering physically. I was especially worried that my cancer might come back, so I didn't want to put my heart into my duties anymore. Seeing no progress in the gospel work, I complained about difficulties and hardships, making excuses that I couldn't handle the work because I lacked caliber, always wanting to shirk my responsibilities for an easier duty. The truth was, if I'd been willing to pay a price, I could have done the work well, but I was afraid of trouble, and didn't want to make the effort to seek God's words to solve the brothers' and sisters' difficulties. I was scared of my body breaking down, so I just looked on at the slow work progress without caring, resulting in the gospel work being ineffective for months. This was all caused by my excessive desire for comfort. Even with this being the case, when the sister pruned me, I didn't reflect and tried to justify myself instead. God hated and was disgusted by my attitude toward my duties. God used this situation to stop my duties, fully revealing God's righteous disposition. But I didn't reflect on myself, and thought that God was using this situation to reveal and eliminate me, and I lived in misunderstanding. I didn't understand God's good intentions at all! Realizing this, I felt deeply indebted to God, and so I prayed to God, "Oh God, I haven't fulfilled my responsibilities, and when confronted with difficulties, I complained, caring only for my flesh and fearing exhaustion. I didn't consider Your intention at all. I now recognize

my rebelliousness and am willing to repent. I don't know if I will have the opportunity to do duties in the future, but if I do, I am willing to consider Your intention, and not seek physical comfort anymore."

After that, I calmed down, read God's words, and prayed to God, reflecting on why I was unwilling to suffer or pay a price in my duties. Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? ... A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God exposes that when people face difficulties in their duties, they complain and are unwilling to cooperate, and that such people who seek comfort are like pigs, only knowing to glut themselves on food, drink, and sleep, without any positive pursuit.

Reflecting on God's words, I saw that I was just like this. Doing the duty of a leader was an opportunity for me to practice, enabling me to seek the truth and shoulder work when difficulties arise. But when I saw that being a leader meant taking on a lot of concern and hard work, I became resistant, and when the gospel work was ineffective and required me to suffer and pay a price, I cared only for my body, fearing that exhaustion would cause my cancer to come back, so I kept making excuses and wanting to resign. I saw that I had no conscience or sense of responsibility. I had been irresponsible toward my duties and taken them lightly, resulting in the gospel work making no progress, and I also didn't provide any help to the brothers and sisters. Though I didn't exhaust myself, I delayed the church's work. I had been a selfish and untrustworthy person, how could God not hate and be disgusted by me? Thinking back to when the church had fewer members, although there were a lot of tasks and some difficulties in the work, by paying a price and cooperating, after a while, the work showed signs of improvement, and I came to understand some truth principles. As the number of church members increased, and some problems appeared in the work, I was unwilling to pay a price or seek the truth to solve them, because I was afraid of my body breaking down. As a result, not only was the work ineffective, but I didn't gain any truth either. God has paid such a great price for me, He arranged many situations to purify and change my corrupt disposition, and He gave me the opportunity to gain the truth through my duties, but when faced with difficulties involving physical suffering, I shrank back. This meant that I not only let down God's painstaking intention but that I also caused losses to the church's work, and left transgressions in my wake. I felt so guilty and prayed to God, wishing to repent.

After praying, I recalled a passage of God's words: **"How you regard God's commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man's supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God's commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). It was true. I had been dismissive, resistant, and lacking in a sense of burden toward my duties. This was a serious betrayal of God and I had been more lamentable than Judas. Judas sold out the Lord Jesus for the sake of his own interests, and at that time, God didn't preach to him much. But today, I had read so many of God's words, and I understood some truths and God's intentions to save people, yet instead of trying my best to do my duties to repay God's love, I heeded my flesh and was irresponsible toward the church's work. Weren't my actions more loathsome than Judas'? In my duties, I only considered my flesh, always took the easy option, and completely disregarded the church's work. My behavior represented a betrayal of God, and warranted being cursed and punished by God. The truth is, if I'd been more diligent in my duties and willing to put in some effort and pay a price, then the gospel work wouldn't have been ineffective for months. I had treated my duties lightly and delayed the gospel work. This was a serious transgression! Realizing this, I felt afraid. I reflected on the fact that my attitude toward my duties truly disgusted and was hated by God and that I deserved to be cursed. But God did not treat me according to my actions. Instead, He used the CCP's arrest

of me to compel me to come before Him to reflect on and recognize my corrupt disposition, in the hope that I would be able to forsake my flesh and turn to Him. I was willing to accept God's judgment and repent to God, and in the future, no matter how tiring or difficult my duties were, I wouldn't shirk them, and I only wanted to do my best to cooperate.

Later, to address my constant fear of my body breaking down and my death-fearing state, I read more of God's words that resolved my concerns. God says: **"In fact, if one really has faith in God in their heart, they first of all must know that a person's lifespan is in God's hands. The timing of one's birth and death is predestined by God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"Some people do everything possible, using various methods to treat their illnesses, but no matter what treatment is used, they cannot be cured. The more they are treated, the more serious the illness becomes. Instead of praying to God to find out exactly what is going on with the illness, and looking for the root cause, they take matters into their own hands. They end up employing a lot of methods and spending quite a bit of money, but their disease still does not get cured. Then, once they've given up on treatment, the illness unexpectedly heals on its own after some time, and they do not know how it happened. Some people develop an unremarkable disease and are not really concerned about it, but one day their condition worsens and they die suddenly. What's going on with that? People are unable to fathom that; actually, from God's point of view, this is because that person's mission in this world was completed, so He took them away. People often say, 'People don't die if they aren't sick.' Is this really the case? There have been people who, after being examined at the hospital, were found to have no illness. They were extremely healthy but ended up dying within a few days.**

This is called dying without sickness. There are many such people. This means that a person has reached the end of their life, and they have been taken back to the spiritual realm. Some people have survived cancer and tuberculosis and still lived into their seventies or eighties. There are quite a few such people. All this hinges on God's ordinations. Having this understanding is true faith in God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's words, I understood that whether my illness will return and whether I will die are in God's hands, and that these are not things I can control. Just like my cancer was not a product of my own will, and when I got sick and when I recovered were all predestined by God. What I should do is submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements and do my duty well, and I should not worry in vain about life and death. I had always worried that exhausting myself in my duties would cause my illness to return and that I would die, I hadn't carried a sense of burden for my duties, and I had delayed the church's work. At that point I understood that a person's life and death are in God's hands, and that regardless of whether my cancer was to return, I had to do my duties well, and that if God allows for death to come upon me, I should have an attitude of acceptance and submission, which is in line with God's intention.

I also thought about how Noah treated God's commission. God says: **"Faced with all manner of troubles, difficult situations, and challenges, Noah did not shrink back. When some of his more difficult engineering tasks frequently failed and underwent damage, even though Noah felt upset and anxious in his heart, when he thought of God's words, when he remembered every word that God commanded of him, and God's elevation of him, then he often felt extremely motivated: 'I cannot give up, I cannot discard what God commanded and entrusted me to do; this is God's commission, and since I accepted it, since I heard the**

words spoken by God and the voice of God, and since I accepted this from God, then I should submit absolutely, which is what ought to be attained by a human being.’ So, no matter what kind of difficulties he faced, no matter what kind of mockery or slander he encountered, no matter how exhausted his body became, how tired, he did not forsake what had been entrusted to him by God, and constantly kept in mind every single word of what God had said and commanded. No matter how his environments changed, no matter how great the difficulty he faced, he trusted that none of this would go on forever, that God’s words alone would never pass away, and only that which God commanded to be done would surely be accomplished. Noah had in him true faith in God, and the submission that he ought to have, and he continued to build the ark that God had asked him to build. Day by day, year by year, Noah grew older, but his faith did not diminish, and there was no change in his attitude and determination to complete God’s commission. Though there were times when his body felt tired and exhausted, and he fell ill, and in his heart he was weak, his determination and perseverance toward completing God’s commission and submitting to God’s words did not lessen. During the years that Noah built the ark, Noah was practicing listening to and submitting to the words God had said, and he was also practicing an important truth of a created being and ordinary person needing to complete God’s **commission**” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Three: How Noah and Abraham Obeyed God’s Words and Submitted to Him (Part Two)). From God’s words, I saw that Noah was able to consider God’s intention. Facing the huge difficulty of building the ark, though his body needed to endure much suffering, he did not shrink back. Instead, he persevered in the commission God gave him day in and day out for a hundred years, until the ark was

built. Comparing Noah's practice with my own, I felt so ashamed and humiliated. I hadn't persisted in my duty, but instead, I'd complained about difficulties and hardships, and thought only of my body at every turn. I was in no way comparable to Noah, I was just a person without a conscience. I had cancer and was healed under God's protection, and in these years of doing my duties, my illness had not come back, but instead of trying to repay God's love, I was always thinking about my flesh, worrying about my cancer coming back, and I was always seeking physical comfort. More than once, I even wanted to shirk my duty. I had no loyalty to God, I had been truly selfish and despicable, without any humanity or reason! The more I thought about this, the more guilty I felt, and I felt unworthy of God's exaltation and salvation. I had to follow Noah's example and stop heeding my flesh. If given another opportunity to do my duties, I had to cherish it.

Later, the upper leadership assigned me to supervise the work of a church of newcomers. I was very happy, knowing this was God giving me a chance to repent. When I arrived at the newcomers' church, I saw that the work results were poor, with the gospel work in particular yet to make any progress, and that the team was shorthanded. This made me feel like the difficulties were truly great, and I thought, "To do this work well will require a lot of effort, as well as the study and mastering of various work principles. My health isn't great, what if my body breaks down?" So, I didn't want to pay a price. But I realized my thinking was wrong, and so prayed to God, "Oh God, I don't want to heed my flesh anymore when the church work encounters difficulties, I must have conscience and reason to cooperate with You, please guide me. I am willing to work in complete unison with the brothers and sisters to do the work well." After that, I made an effort to find suitable host houses when I saw there were no places for gatherings, so that my brothers and sisters could live a church life. I also

felt troubled when I saw brothers and sisters who preached the gospel living in difficulty, but I thought about how preaching the gospel is God's intention, and that I couldn't shrink back when faced with difficulties, so I sought God's words to solve the brothers' and sisters' states, and I fellowshiped how Noah treated God's commission, enabling the brothers and sisters to understand the significance of preaching the gospel and God's urgent intention. After my fellowship, the brothers' and sisters' states improved, and they were willing to cooperate on the gospel work. After a while, the gospel work showed some improvement compared to before, which was all thanks to God's guidance!

Through this experience, I gained some understanding of the essence and consequences of craving comfort, and I have also gained some understanding of God's righteous disposition. Today, I am able to correct my attitude and feel a sense of responsibility toward my duties. This result was brought about by God's words, thanks be to God!

27. The Consequences of Being Excessively Jealous

By Qinmo, China

In 2016, I was making videos in the church. I noticed that Sister Xin Cheng produced relatively more videos, and during our discussions, her opinions were mostly adopted, and the supervisor frequently asked her to share her views. I assumed that she had been practicing for a long time and was technically proficient, so I thought, “Since I’m new here, I should learn more from her.” But later, I found out that Xin Cheng had only been here for two months, and I started to think, “We both started doing our duty here around the same time. Maybe others will compare me with her. If she can gain everyone’s approval, I can’t be worse than her, or else people will look down on me.” Afterward, I deliberately watched the videos Xin Cheng made, but I didn’t see anything particularly special, so I thought her skills were nothing special—I should be able to reach that level too. To prove that I wasn’t any less capable than Xin Cheng, I carefully pondered every time we discussed the presentation of the videos, trying to offer insights more thoughtful than hers. Even when her views were appropriate, I would still add my own insights on top of hers, so that everyone would think I considered issues more comprehensively than she did.

One time, I saw a video made by Xin Cheng that was quite good. It was refreshing to watch. Even though I conceded it in my heart, the thought of admitting that her video was good felt like publicly slapping myself, and I just couldn’t bring myself to do it. I consoled myself by thinking, “If I put a bit of heart into it, I wouldn’t be any worse than her.” After that, I was especially conscientious in making videos, repeatedly deliberating on the highlights, and considering how to edit them for a good effect. After some

hard work, I produced a few videos, and when I had Xin Cheng check them, she didn't find any issues, so I felt confident that her skill level was about the same as mine. But later, the supervisor asked Xin Cheng to help guide me. I thought to myself, "We both started around the same time, so why should she guide me? The supervisor must think I'm not as good as her." I felt deeply unconvinced in my heart, thinking, "If I obediently learn from her, it will be like admitting I'm inferior to her, and even if I do well in the future, everyone will credit her instead. I am not going to let that happen!" So, when discussing the presentation of the videos with Xin Cheng, I didn't care about her opinions at all and just casually dismissed them. On the contrary, when I shared my views, Xin Cheng listened very attentively, and she would often bring up areas she couldn't see through and seek my input on them. I took this as a sign that I knew more than she did, and didn't consider her worthy of my attention. Not long after, Xin Cheng was promoted to do her duty in another location, and I felt both happy and envious. I was envious of her promotion, but at the same time, I was secretly pleased because her departure meant I had one less competitor.

After Xin Cheng left, there was a time when we were discussing the presentation of a video. Some issues were hard to see through, causing frequent hold-ups and slow progress. I couldn't help but think, "In the past, when the supervisor asked Xin Cheng to help me and fellowship on her experience with us, I dismissed it, thinking that I understood everything she knew and that it didn't matter whether she was in the team or not. Now that Xin Cheng has just left, we're facing difficulties. It turns out that my understanding of the principles is limited. Without someone to oversee and take the helm, I can't produce an up-to-standard video at all." At that moment, I felt how arrogant I had been, and I began to miss Xin Cheng's presence, thinking how great it would have been to have another person and

another set of suggestions to refer to. I recalled some words of God: **“You must achieve harmonious cooperation for the purpose of the work of God, for the benefit of the church, and so as to spur your brothers and sisters onward. You should coordinate with one another, each amending the other and arriving at a better work outcome, so as to show consideration for God’s intentions. This is what true cooperation is, and only those who engage in it will gain true entry”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Serve As the Israelites Did). I suddenly realized, that God had arranged for me to work with Xin Cheng so that we could complement each other’s strengths and weaknesses to make the videos better. But for the past few months, I hadn’t been attending to what I should have been doing, focusing only on comparing myself to her and showing off my own abilities, excluding her and not cooperating with her. Now that Xin Cheng had left, I had no chance to learn from her. At this point, I hated myself for having been so unreasonable back then.

In my seeking, I came across these words of God: **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God’s house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). **“What’s the most glaring disposition of antichrists? That is, what’s the disposition you’ll be able to see through to when you come into contact with them, from just hearing a phrase or**

two of theirs? Arrogance. ... It's fair to say that because they're haughty and believe that there's no one who measures up to them—that because of this reason, they don't wish to cooperate or discuss things with anyone, in anything they do. They may listen to sermons, read God's words, see the exposure of His words, or be pruned at times, but in any case, they won't own up to having revealed corruption and having transgressed, much less to being arrogant and self-righteous. They aren't able to understand that they're just an ordinary person, of ordinary caliber. They can't understand such things. Regardless of how you prune them, they'll still think they're of good caliber, that they're higher than ordinary people. Is this not beyond hope? (It is.) It's beyond hope. That's an antichrist" (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). Through the exposure of God's words, I realized that my behavior had been exactly the envy of talented people and the arrogance beyond reason that God had exposed. Reflecting on when I had just arrived and started making videos, when I had seen that Xin Cheng was able to gain everyone's approval even though she had also just joined, I had compared myself to her, thinking that if she could do it, so could I. Whether it was making videos or sharing views, I had racked my brains trying to show off my cleverness. I had also been unwilling to acknowledge Xin Cheng's strengths. Her level of video-making skill was clearly higher than mine, and though I had conceded this in my heart, I had refused to acknowledge it verbally. The supervisor had asked Xin Cheng to help guide me more so that I could quickly grasp the principles and improve my level of skill, but I had taken that as a sign of looking down upon me, and had repeatedly treated Xin Cheng with a flippant attitude. Due to my jealousy, I had remained stuck in my ways with no desire to improve, and hadn't learned

anything from cooperating with her. Moreover, since I had just started training in video-making, I had many deficiencies in my skills, but I had still felt like I knew everything, and had been blindly and stubbornly arrogant. Xin Cheng was better than me at making videos, and was even able to humbly seek guidance and discuss issues with me, but I ignored her strengths and even shamelessly believed I was better than her. If I'd had even a bit of reason to be able to acknowledge my inadequacies, get over myself and learn from Xin Cheng, I wouldn't be as destitute and pitiful as I was now. Upon realizing this, I prayed to God, "God, I have not been attending to what I should have been doing and have let down Your earnest intention. Even now, I still haven't mastered the skills, which has delayed my duty. I am willing to repent."

Two years later, a new supervisor named Wang Lu was appointed. I had previously been responsible for Wang Lu's work, but now she had become a supervisor following up on and overseeing my work, which made me feel quite uncomfortable. I thought, "I've been doing my duty for longer than she has, but she has become a supervisor immediately upon arrival. Will the brothers and sisters think that despite my longer training, I'm still not as good as a newcomer?" Although I never intended to become a supervisor, I didn't want to be looked down upon either. So I tentatively asked a sister about her opinion of Wang Lu, and the sister said that Wang Lu had quite a good grasp of the principles and that the results of the videos she made were fairly good. Hearing this, I felt unconvinced and couldn't believe she was really that good. Afterward, I kept looking for the slightest problems with Wang Lu to redress the imbalance in my mindset. One evening, Wang Lu came to summarize the issues in our work, and I wanted to see what exactly her level was, so I waited for her to fellowship. However, she was silent for a long time. I thought, "As a supervisor, why

don't you get the ball rolling? It seems that you're just a supervisor in name only. You can't even organize this bit of work." Afterward, I deliberately told the sisters that Wang Lu was passive and inefficient in her duties, and they agreed with my view. I felt a bit of joy at her misfortune, thinking, "Even though she is well-regarded now, her work capability isn't impressive in any way. She probably won't be able to handle the supervisor's role for long. By then, the brothers and sisters will think that, although I don't have the caliber to be a supervisor, I am at least dependable and reliable in my duty, and no worse than her." During another gathering, Wang Lu asked about my state, and I gave a very dismissive answer, making it hard for her to grasp my true state, and intentionally putting her in a difficult position. At the usual gatherings, even if I had insights, I wouldn't immediately fellowship, and even eagerly hoped that others would also remain silent, to see how Wang Lu would handle the situation. But everyone took the initiative to open up and fellowship, and they actively responded to any questions Wang Lu asked. Seeing that everyone felt free and at ease while I felt out of place, I asked myself, "Why can everyone else treat Wang Lu correctly, whereas I always try to go up against her?" On reflection, I realized that my jealousy was at work again.

One day, I read these words of God: **"What kind of disposition is it when a person sees someone who is better than them and they try to bring them down, spreading rumors about them, or employing despicable means to denigrate them and undermine their reputation—even trampling all over them—in order to protect their own place in people's minds? This is not just arrogance and conceit, it is the disposition of Satan, it is a malicious disposition. That this person can attack and alienate people who are better and stronger than them is insidious and wicked. And that they will stop at nothing to bring people**

down shows that there is much of a devil in them! Living by the disposition of Satan, they are liable to belittle people, to try to stitch them up, to make things hard for them. Is this not evildoing? And living like this, they still think they're okay, that they're a good person—yet when they see someone better than them, they are liable to give them a hard time, to trample all over them. What is the issue here? Are people who are capable of committing such evil deeds not unscrupulous and willful? Such people only think of their own interests, they only consider their own feelings, and all they want is to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and aims. They don't care how much damage they cause to the work of the church, and they would prefer to sacrifice the interests of the house of God to protect their status in people's minds and their own reputation. Are people like this not arrogant and self-righteous, selfish and vile? Such people are not only arrogant and self-righteous, they are also extremely selfish and vile. They are not considerate of God's intentions at all. Do such people have God-fearing hearts? They do not have God-fearing hearts at all. This is why they act wantonly and do whatever they want, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What is the nature of such behavior? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal reputation and status; they are too deceitful and insidious. To put it more harshly, the essence of the problem is that such people have no God-fearing heart at all. They are not frightened of God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is not worthy of mention and is

insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Can those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not have God-fearing hearts, put the truth into practice? Absolutely not. So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are for the sake of their own status and prestige, of protecting all of their interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What kind of people have believed in God for many years, yet have no God-fearing hearts? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satans? And what things most lack a God-fearing heart? Apart from the beasts, it is the evil and the antichrists, the devils and Satan's ilk. They don't accept the truth at all; they are entirely without a God-fearing heart. They are capable of any evil; they are the enemies of God, and the enemies of His chosen people" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Reading God's words, I felt they deeply pierced my heart. Terms like "**the evil**," "**the antichrists**," "**the devils**," and "**Satan**" made me feel utterly ashamed. I clearly couldn't be a supervisor, yet I wanted others to praise me. Seeing Wang Lu, a newcomer, surpassing others, I was afraid people would say that despite my long period of practice, I was still inferior to the newcomer, which made me seem inadequate. Out of jealousy and discontent, I focused on finding faults with her. When Wang Lu first joined and was still unfamiliar with the work, I tried to find fault with her to criticize her for being passive and inefficient, to belittle her and undermine her efforts. During gatherings, I was not proactive in fellowship and didn't want to let other brothers and sisters share either, deliberately intending to

embarrass her. I was truly despicable and malicious, with no fear of God at all! Outwardly, I was jealous of her and worked to undermine her, but in reality, I was disturbing and disrupting the church's work, and was offending God's disposition. It was doing evil! I couldn't fulfill the role of a supervisor myself, yet I seized on others' faults to make things difficult for them, hoping they would fail too. I was acting as a servant of Satan. If I continued to live in jealousy and competition, sooner or later, I would face God's punishment for doing many evil deeds.

In my reflection, I read these words of God: **“In the camp of Satan, whether in society or in official circles, what is the prevailing atmosphere? What practices are popular? You ought to have some understanding of these. What are the principles and guidelines for their actions? Each is a law unto themselves; each goes their own way. They act in their own interests and do as they choose. Whoever has authority gets the final say. They do not give even a fleeting thought to others. They just do as they will, striving for fame, gain, and status, and acting entirely according to their own preferences. As soon as they receive power, they quickly exert this power over others. If you offend them, they wish to put you through the wringer, and you are unable to do anything but offer them gifts. They are as vicious as scorpions, willing to violate laws, government regulations, and even commit crimes. These are all things they are capable of. This is how dark and evil it is in Satan's camp. Now, God has come to save humanity, to allow people to accept the truth, understand the truth, and break free from Satan's bondage and power. If you don't accept the truth and don't practice the truth, aren't you still living under Satan's power? In that case, what is the difference between your current state and that of devils and Satan? You would compete in the same way that nonbelievers compete.**

You would fight in the same way that nonbelievers fight. From morning to night, you would plot, scheme, envy, and engage in disputes. What is the root of this problem? It is because people have corrupt dispositions, and live according to these corrupt dispositions. The reign of corrupt dispositions is the reign of Satan; corrupted humanity dwells within a satanic disposition, and no one is an exception” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). After reading God’s words, I remembered that before I believed in God, I adhered to rules of survival like “There can only be one alpha male,” and “Legitimacy belongs to the winner; the losers are always in the wrong.” I thought that surpassing those around me and becoming the one who is highly regarded and supported by others was the value of existence. Under the domination of this mindset, in school, those who with higher scores or more attention from teachers became the ones I secretly compared myself to. After entering the workforce, I often heard that to secure a stable position and be respected, one must stand out and be exceptional. When there was someone around who was more capable than I was, it felt like a crisis, as it meant an additional competitor, and in a certain field, if an experienced person is surpassed by a newcomer, it is even more humiliating. I continued viewing things this way even after I began to believe in God. In any group of people, I would first look at who was better than me or who might threaten my position. If anyone surpassed me in any area, I would feel embarrassed and become jealous and unconvinced. When I saw brothers and sisters who were better than me, I became jealous and excluded them, and always tried to belittle them and elevate myself. To outdo them, I could even resort to scheming, seizing on faults, and passing judgments behind their backs, hoping to bring them down to feel satisfied. I realized that living by Satan’s rules of survival, I became arrogant,

malicious, and without humanity, and also disturbed the church's work. God did not treat me according to my evil deeds but still gave me the opportunity to repent. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart, and no longer wished to continue to live according to my corrupt dispositions.

Later, I read these words of God: **“Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's intentions and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been loyal, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well. If you are of poor caliber, if your experience is shallow, or if you are not proficient in your professional work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and you may not get good results—but you will have done your best. You do not satisfy your own selfish desires or preferences. Instead, you give constant consideration to the work of the church and the interests of the house of God. Though you may not achieve good results in your duty, your heart will have been set straight; if, on top of this, you can seek the truth to solve the problems in your duty, you will be up to standard in the performance of your duty, and, at the same time, you will be able to enter into the truth reality. This is what it means to possess testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's words

pointed out to me the principles to practice: When facing situations, I shouldn't prioritize protecting my own interests, face, or status, but should rather consider the interests of God's house, and do whatever is necessary to protect the work of God's house. When I see that others are better than me and can do actual work, I should support and uphold them. Even if they have deficiencies, I should treat them correctly, not holding excessively high expectations for them, and learning from their strengths and virtues. Wang Lu had just started practicing as a supervisor, and it was normal for her to have some shortcomings. As long as she is the right person and can do some actual work, I should help her with love and cooperate with her to do the work well together. This is upholding the work of the church. When I corrected my mindset, I no longer felt jealous of Wang Lu, but instead, I grew to admire her. Despite her young age, she considered issues thoughtfully, worked with composure and steadiness, and paid attention to seeking principles. All these were what I lacked. I no longer felt resistant toward her, I could also take the initiative to report to and discuss with her any issues in the work, and I was also willing to accept her feedback when she pointed out our shortcomings in the work. By practicing this way, I didn't feel embarrassed; instead, I felt more liberated.

Later, I was transferred to another team to work with Jian Ran. Although we had been doing this duty for about the same amount of time, I saw that her efficiency and professional skills were clearly superior to mine. At first, I felt quite embarrassed and worried that others might look down on me. But then I realized that with her strong skills, I could learn more from her to make up for my deficiencies, so I was very willing to cooperate with her. However, later, when the supervisor assigned her to be in charge of the work, and other sisters often went to her to discuss some issues, I felt imbalanced again. I thought, "Isn't it just that she's a bit more capable and

effective in her duty? Is that really a reason for everyone to flock around her? It seems that I'm invisible." I felt unconvinced in my heart, but at that moment, I realized it was my jealousy acting up again. So, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to correctly handle this situation. Afterward, I read these words of God: **"The role you play in your life and the duty you do were ordained by God long ago. Some people see that others possess strengths they do not and are discontent. They want to change things by learning more, seeing more, and being more diligent. But there is a limit to what their diligence can achieve, and they cannot surpass those with gifts and expertise. No matter how much you fight, it is useless. God has ordained what you will be, and there is nothing anyone can do to change it. Whatever you are good at, that is where you should make an effort. Whatever duty you are suited to is the duty you should perform. Do not try to force yourself into areas outside your skillset and do not envy others. Everyone has their function. Do not think that you can do everything well, or that you are more perfect or better than others, always desiring to replace others and put yourself on display. This is a corrupt disposition. There are those who think that they cannot do anything well, and that they have no skills at all. If that is the case, you should just be a person who listens and submits in a down-to-earth manner. Do what you can and do it well, with all your strength. That is enough. God will be satisfied"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). From God's words, I understood that everyone's caliber and strengths are different, they were all predetermined by God, and we cannot compete for them. God's intention is for us to correctly treat our own and others' strengths and shortcomings, to stand in our own position and do our duties well. It was a fact that my work capability and grasp of principles were not as good as Jian Ran's, and the

brothers and sisters consulted her more for the sake of doing their duties well, not to regard her highly and belittle me. Everyone was doing their duties as a created being in their respective roles; no one was higher or lower than anyone else. Jian Ran's strengths precisely complemented my shortcomings, so I should actively seek her advice and learn from her to gain more. At this moment, I felt brightened. I need to face my own caliber and deficiencies, put aside my ambitions and desires, and do what I am capable of doing well. This is the reason that I should have. Later, I focused on doing the work I should do to the best of my ability, and sought and discussed together with Jian Ran when I encountered things I could not see through. Later, when I met people who were better than me, there were times when jealousy would still surface, but I could consciously reflect on myself and pray to rebel against that, and my heart didn't feel so constrained and bound. Living this way brought much more ease and release. Thank God!

28. Discerning People Based on God's Words

By Xiang Wang, China

Recently, Meng Jie, my supervisor, told me that Li Ping didn't accept the truth, always over-analyzing people and things and disturbing church life, and that brothers and sisters fellowshiped with her and helped her, yet she still didn't reverse course. She asked me to write an evaluation of her. She also told me that if Li Ping was determined to be a disbeliever based on the evaluations of the majority, then she would be cleared out from the church. I was somewhat surprised. I hadn't expected that Li Ping would reach this point. At first, it was hard for me to accept. Li Ping's family had been believing in the Lord for generations. She served the Lord in the church in her teens and she had accepted this stage of God's work for more than 20 years. Now, she was a little over 50, and she was still unmarried. Her forsaking and expending of herself, exercising restraint, and enduring suffering seemed like true belief in God. Now, she was being defined as a disbeliever based on her over-analyzing people and things. Was this not a bit too harsh? Thinking back to when I had interacted with Li Ping in the past, her humanity didn't seem poor; it was just that she argued over right and wrong when issues cropped up. Shouldn't people like this be given a chance to stay in the church and labor? Later, I heard Meng Jie say that based on Li Ping's consistent behavior, it had already been determined that she was a disbeliever. She also reminded me to examine myself to see what made me unable to see through her, and told me to seek the truth to resolve it. Later on, I consciously worked on this problem in my seeking, and thought back to all the times that Li Ping and I had interacted.

In 2019, Li Ping and I were partnered together to do our duty. At that time, a sister in our group, Yingxin, was not working well together with Li

Ping. Yingxin wanted to talk about it with Li Ping, but Li Ping refused. Yingxin became somewhat negative, and when the leader inquired about her and Li Ping's states, Yingxin truthfully stated that the two of them were not working well together. Li Ping thought that Yingxin saying this had harmed her reputation, and she became strongly biased against Yingxin. Afterward, she twisted the facts and said that Yingxin had deliberately lodged a complaint against her in an effort to exclude her from the group. Before a gathering, Yingxin suggested that we first talk about our states and then do a focused reading of God's words based on our states. Li Ping thought that Yingxin was targeting her, implying that she didn't integrate discussion of the brothers' and sisters' states into the gathering, so she angrily said that they didn't have enough time for that, and that they wouldn't be talking about the matter of states. There was also a review meeting at which Yingxin said that the results of church work had recently been on the downslide and reminded us all to search for the reasons behind this. Again, Li Ping thought that this was about her, and she said impetuously, "If you think I'm no good, then report me to the supervisor and have me transferred." We had to spend time fellowshiping with her and couldn't discuss the work normally. At the time, Sister Luo Wen had only just joined the group, and when difficulties and problems came up in her work, she would often consult Yingxin. Li Ping saw that Luo Wen thought highly of Yingxin, and so she told Luo Wen face-to-face that Yingxin was using some underhanded means to win her over to join together to exclude her. When Luo Wen heard this, she was so angry that she started crying. She felt that Li Ping wasn't easy to work with and didn't want to do her duty here anymore. Li Ping not only didn't reflect on herself, she even said that if Luo Wen wanted to leave, it was up to her. Sometimes, we would discuss work in the room together, and Li Ping would get

suspicious and think that we were speaking badly about her behind her back. Because of this, she was often at odds with the sisters in the group. In fact, these states of hers had been going on for quite a long time. Our supervisor fellowshiped with her and helped her multiple times, but she never reversed course. Back then, I had just joined the group, and I fellowshiped with her and said that she should focus on seeking the truth and learning lessons, but she argued over right and wrong and made excuses for herself. I was very confused. She had believed in God for years, so why didn't she accept anything from God when things happened to her and instead always over-analyzed people and things? Then I thought, "Maybe she's just in a bad state right now. If we fellowship and help her more, she might reverse her state and not over-analyze people and things so much." Later on, because Li Ping and Yingxin didn't work well together, our supervisor arranged for me to partner with Li Ping. At first, I didn't think that after being separated from Yingxin, Li Ping would still focus on her so much, but each time I mentioned Yingxin, Li Ping would once again bring up matters related to her and recount them. Her words were full of implied judgments about Yingxin. However, I couldn't see her essence clearly, and thought that she was just temporarily unable to get past this, that perhaps she would get over it as time went by. Later on, Li Ping was transferred to another group to do her duty. The brothers and sisters reported that she was still acting like this, that whenever something touched upon her pride, she would cause endless fuss and could not work well together with others. She also influenced the states of others and delayed the group's work. Our supervisor fellowshiped with her multiple times and told her to focus on seeking the truth and learning lessons, but she never accepted this and persisted in defending herself, causing disruptions and

disturbances to the work. Up until she was dismissed, she was debating the rights and wrongs and not self-reflecting or trying to know herself.

Later, I heard brothers and sisters talk about some of her behaviors. Her behavior of over-analyzing people and things was really quite prominent. Not only did she make people feel constrained, she also disturbed the church's work. I thought, "How does God classify such behaviors?" Concerning this problem, I read some relevant words of God. Almighty God says: **"Is it not vile that some people like to split hairs and go down blind alleys whenever something happens to them? This is a big problem. Clear-minded people will not make this mistake, but this is what absurd people are like. They always imagine that others are making things difficult for them, that others are deliberately giving them a hard time, so they always antagonize other people. Is this not a deviation? They do not put in effort when it comes to the truth, they prefer to quibble about unimportant things when something happens to them, demanding explanations, trying to save face, and they always use human solutions to approach these matters. This is the greatest obstacle to life entry. If you believe in God this way, or practice this way, you will never attain the truth because you never come before God. You never come before God to receive all that God has set out for you, nor do you use the truth to approach all this, instead you use human solutions to approach things. Therefore, in the eyes of God, you have strayed too far from Him. Not only has your heart strayed from Him, your entire being does not live in His presence. This is how God views those who always over-analyze things and split hairs. ... I tell you that no matter what duty a believer in God performs—whether they handle external matters, or a duty that relates to the various work or fields of expertise of the house of God—if they do not frequently come**

before God, and live in His presence, and they do not dare to accept His scrutiny, and they do not seek the truth from God, then they are a disbeliever, and they are no different from a nonbeliever” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). **“For a matter involving fame, gain, or face, they insist on clarifying who is right or wrong, who is superior or inferior, and must argue to prove a point. Others don’t want to hear it. People say, ‘Can you simplify what you’re saying? Can you be straightforward? Why do you have to be so trivial?’ Their thoughts are so complicated and convoluted, and they live such an exhausting life without realizing the underlying problems. Why can’t they seek the truth and be honest? Because they are averse to the truth and don’t want to be honest. So, what do they rely on in life? (Philosophies for worldly dealings and human methods.) Depending on human methods to act tends to lead to results in which one ends up either being laughed at or revealing an ugly side of oneself. And so, on closer examination, their actions, the things they spend all day doing—they all relate to their own face, fame, gain, and vanity. It’s as if they’re living in a web, they have to rationalize or make excuses for everything, and they are always speaking for their own sake. Their thinking is complicated, they talk so much nonsense, their words are so tangled. They’re always arguing over what’s right and wrong, there’s no end to it. If they’re not trying to gain face, they’re competing for reputation and status, and there is never a time when they are not living for these things. And what is the ultimate consequence? They may have gained face, but everyone is sick and tired of them. People have seen through them and realized that they are devoid of the truth reality, that they are not someone who sincerely believes in God. When the leaders and workers**

or other brothers and sisters use a few words to prune them, they stubbornly refuse to accept, they insist on trying to rationalize or make excuses, and they try to pass the buck. During assemblies they defend themselves, start arguments, and stir up trouble among God's chosen ones. In their hearts, they're thinking, 'Is there really nowhere for me to argue my case?' What kind of person is this? Is this someone who loves the truth? Is this someone who believes in God? When they hear anyone say something that doesn't align with their intentions, they always want to argue and demand an explanation; they get tangled up in who's right and who's wrong, they do not seek the truth and treat it according to the truth principles. No matter how simple a matter is, they have to make it so complicated—they're just asking for trouble, they deserve to be so exhausted!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

From God's words, I saw that those who over-analyze people and things acknowledge doctrinally that God holds sovereignty over everything, and that their daily circumstances are arranged by Him. But, when faced with these actual circumstances, they do not accept them from God, nor do they seek the truth or learn lessons. Instead, they believe that someone is making things difficult for them, and in order to redeem their pride and reputation, they always debate the rights and wrongs, causing endless fuss. All they bring to others and to the church work are disturbances. The essence of such people is that of disbelievers. For instance, look at Li Ping. When she was partnered with Yingxin, it was evident that the two of them weren't working well together and that it had already affected their duty. Yingxin reported the true situation to the leader, hoping to seek help, but Li Ping didn't seek the truth and reflect on herself, instead thinking that Yingxin was lodging a complaint against her. Afterward, she always kept a close watch on Yingxin. When gathering or

discussing work, if Yingxin pointed out some problems or made a reasonable suggestion, Li Ping couldn't approach it correctly, instead believing that Yingxin was targeting her and thus deliberately opposing Yingxin. She even purposely caused trouble, saying that if we thought she was no good, we should tell the supervisor to transfer her to another duty. All this made us feel constrained, and it affected church life and the church's work. Sister Luo Wen had just joined the group, and she wasn't familiar with the principles and the professional skills, so she went to talk to Yingxin. Li Ping suspected that Luo Wen looked down on her and was taking Yingxin's side and excluding her. When sisters were normally discussing the work together, Li Ping also suspected that everyone was judging her behind her back, and she even intentionally found fault with people and was difficult with them. This led to people being unable to normally do their duties. Actually, all these things were quite ordinary and simple, things that normal people could understand if they gave it a bit of thought. But she over-analyzed people and things and got all tangled up; her thoughts were extremely complicated. Afterward, everyone fellowshiped on God's words and helped her, but she never showed any intention to seek. Instead, she made excuses and defended herself, and argued over right and wrong, trying to prove her point. In the past, I always thought that her over-analyzing people and things was a temporary bad state. Now I saw that having a momentary corrupt revelation and having the essence of a disbeliever are two different things. It's like how some people have manifestations of over-analyzing people and things, but they are only temporarily unable to understand God's intention on a few specific matters. Or, they make excuses and defend themselves in order to save face, but by praying and seeking or using the fellowship and help of brothers and sisters, they come to understand God's intention and no longer over-analyze so

much. People like this accept the truth and do not have the essence of disbelievers. On the other hand, people who are disbelievers do not accept anything from God no matter what happens to them. Even if it is a very small matter that others are able to understand easily, they always over-analyze people and things and are unable to accept fellowship and help from brothers and sisters. This reveals that they are averse to the truth by nature and comprehend things preposterously. Thinking back over Li Ping's behavior, this is exactly how she was when she partnered with Yingxin two or three years ago. Later, she and Yingxin were separated, and although on the surface, she didn't appear to be so obviously arguing over right and wrong, every time Yingxin was mentioned, she would start debating right and wrong yet again. It was evident that she had not let this go at all. No matter who she was partnered with, whenever something involved her pride and status, she would dispute it to no end, bringing people nothing but disturbances. Then, several years passed and this was still how she was; there was no repentance and change whatsoever. Her essence was that of a disbeliever.

Before, I believed that since Li Ping appeared to be enthusiastic, giving to charity and helping people, and was able to forsake and expend of herself, that meant she had good humanity and that she should get another chance to repent. Later on, I realized that I did not know how to discern between good and bad humanity. Then, I read some of God's words on this topic. God says: **"When different things happen to people, there are all sorts of manifestations in them that show the difference between good humanity and bad humanity. So what are the criteria for measuring humanity? How should what kind of a person someone is, and whether or not they can be saved, be measured? This depends on whether they love the truth and whether they are able to accept and practice the**

truth. People all have notions and rebelliousness inside them, they all have corrupt dispositions, and so will encounter times when what God asks is at odds with their own interests, and they have to make a choice—these are things that they will all often experience, nobody can avoid them. Everyone will also have times when they misinterpret God and have notions about God, or when they have complaints about Him and are resistant or rebellious toward Him—but because people have different attitudes toward the truth, the way they approach it is different. Some people never speak of their notions, but seek the truth and resolve them on their own. Why do they not speak of them? (They have a God-fearing heart.) That’s right: They have a God-fearing heart. They are afraid that speaking them up will have a negative effect, and they merely try to resolve this in their heart, without affecting anyone else. When they encounter others in a similar state, they use their own experiences to help them. This is being kindhearted. People who are kindhearted are loving toward others, they are willing to help others solve their difficulties. There are principles when they do things and help others, they help others fix problems in order to benefit them, and they say nothing that is not of benefit to them. This is love. Such people have a God-fearing heart, and their actions are principled and wise. These are the criteria for measuring whether people’s humanity is good or bad” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Attitude Man Should Have Toward God). From God’s words, I understood that people with good humanity love the truth, are willing to accept the truth, and have kind hearts. Such people, when associating with others, can put themselves in others’ shoes and consider how to speak and act to edify others. If they have notions about God or develop biases against people, they do not recklessly give vent to them. Rather, they are able to seek the truth to resolve them.

They don't say things that aren't beneficial to people. These kinds of people have God-fearing hearts and have principles in their speech and actions. These are people with good humanity. Comparing this to Li Ping's behavior based on God's words, every time something involved her reputation and status, she vented her discontent. She didn't consider whether her words would hurt her brothers and sisters or what consequences they might bring. When others pointed out her problems, she didn't accept it at all, and afterward she would argue over what was right and wrong. Li Ping had believed in God for more than 20 years; could it really be that she didn't understand how to submit and seek the truth? It wasn't that she didn't understand these things, but rather that her humanity was poor. In the past, I only looked at her exterior. I thought that since she had believed in God for a long time, was warm-hearted toward people, was able to forsake and expend herself, and often gave to charity and helped people, she must have good humanity. But when people actually pointed out her problems and fellowshiped with her, she didn't accept it at all, and what's more, she turned things around and attacked and judged others. This was not true good humanity.

Through the exposing of God's words, I gained some discernment of Li Ping's humanity and her disbelieving behavior. However, when I thought of how she had believed in God for decades and was able to forsake, expend herself, and endure suffering, and how now she was going to be cleared out, I felt some sympathy for her. Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"Some people say, 'If one eats and drinks of God's words and fellowships about the truth every day, if they are able to do their duty normally, if they do whatever the church arranges, and never cause disturbances or disruptions—and though there may be times they violate the truth principles, they don't do so consciously or with intent**

—doesn't this demonstrate that they are pursuing the truth?' This is a good question. Many people have this idea. First of all, you must understand whether someone could attain an understanding of the truth and gain the truth by practicing consistently in this way. Share your thoughts. (Although practicing in this way is correct, it seems more along the lines of religious ritual—it's rule-following. It can't lead to an understanding of the truth or gaining the truth.) So, what sort of behaviors are these, really? (They're superficially good behaviors.) I like that answer. They are merely good behaviors that arise after a person comes to believe in God, upon the foundation of that person's conscience and reason, once they have been influenced by various good and positive teachings. But they are no more than good behaviors, and they are far from being the pursuit of the truth. What, then, is the root of these good behaviors? What gives rise to them? They arise from a person's conscience and reason, their morality, the favorable feelings they have toward believing in God, and their self-restraint. Since they are good behaviors, they have no relation to the truth, and they are certainly not the same thing. Possessing good behaviors is not the same as practicing the truth, and if a person behaves well it does not mean that they have God's approval. Good behaviors and practicing the truth are two different things—they have no bearing on each other. Practicing the truth is God's requirement and it is entirely in line with His intentions; good behavior comes from man's will and carries with it man's intents and motives—it is something that man regards as good. Although good behaviors are not evil deeds, they contravene the truth principles and have nothing to do with the truth. No matter how good these behaviors are, or how much they accord with man's notions and imaginings, they have no relation to the truth. So no amount of good behavior can attain

God's approval. Since good behavior is defined in this way, clearly good behaviors do not relate to the practice of the truth. If people were to be sorted into types according to their behavior, then these good behaviors would, at the most, be the actions of loyal laborers and nothing more. They have no relation at all to the practice of the truth or to true submission to God. They are merely a sort of behavior, and are completely irrelevant to people's dispositional change, to their submission to and acceptance of the truth, to the fear of God and shunning of evil, or any other practical elements that truly involve the truth. So, why are they called good behaviors, then? Here is an explanation, and naturally it is also an explanation of the essence of this question. It is that these behaviors stem only from people's notions, their preferences, their volition, and their own self-motivated efforts. They are not manifestations of the repentance that come with gaining true self-knowledge by accepting the truth and the judgment and chastisement of God's words, nor are they the behaviors or actions of practicing the truth that arise when people try to submit to God. Do you understand this? It means that these good behaviors do not in any way involve a change in a person's disposition, or what comes of undergoing the judgment and chastisement of God's words, or the true repentance that arises from coming to know one's corrupt disposition. They certainly do not relate to man's true submission to God and the truth; still less do they relate to having a heart of fear and love for God. Good behaviors have nothing at all to do with these things; they are merely something that comes from man and something that man regards as good. Yet there are many people who see these good behaviors as a sign that someone is practicing the truth. This is a grave mistake, an absurd view and understanding. These good behaviors are

just a performance of religious ceremony, and going through the motions. They are not at all related to practicing the truth. God may not condemn them outright, but He absolutely does not approve of them; that is certain” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (1)). Pondering God’s words, I understood that Li Ping believing in the Lord for more than 10 years, accepting God’s work of the last days for more than 20 years, and always enthusiastically expending herself, forsaking her family, and giving up her career during this time were all examples of her superficial enthusiasm and good behavior. They did not measure up to the standard of practicing the truth. After believing in God, many people display some good behavior, but because their nature is not one of loving the truth, and because they cannot accept the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, their life disposition does not change at all even after years of believing in God. Such people will still be abandoned and eliminated by God in the end. Displaying good behavior does not mean one is practicing the truth. If one merely displays some good behavior but never accepts or practices the truth, then such a person is capable of resisting God whenever or wherever. It’s like how in religion, there were many people who believed in the Lord for a lifetime, working hard, forsaking and expending themselves. However, when Almighty God, Christ of the last days, came to work, express the truth, and save mankind, they condemned, resisted, and rejected Him. They turned up their noses at the truths He expressed. No matter how much good behavior they displayed, God did not approve of them. He condemned them as people who resisted God. I thought of the Pharisees, who served Jehovah God and traveled across sea and land to preach. In the eyes of others, their behavior was very good, and no fault could even be found, but when the Lord Jesus appeared to do work, they resisted, condemned, and even crucified Him. Their nature

essence was one of hating the truth and God. The Lord Jesus condemned them as the ilk of the serpent, and in the end, they were all punished and cursed by God. From this, I saw that when only looking at people's superficial good behavior and not discerning their attitude toward the truth, it was so easy to be misled!

Later on, I thought, "So, how exactly should people revealed as disbelievers like Li Ping be regarded? Which people can stay at the church to labor, and which should be cleared out? What principles does this involve?" I read this passage of God's word: **"If they are disbelievers, nonbelievers, yet they are willing to labor and can be obedient and submit, then even if they don't pursue the truth, don't bother them and don't clear them out. Instead, permit them to continue laboring, and if you can help them, then help them. If they have no desire even to labor, and they begin to be slipshod and commit evil acts, then we've done everything that is called for. If they want to leave, then let them leave, and don't miss them when they're gone. They are at the point when they should leave, and such people are not worth your pity, for they are disbelievers. What is most pitiful is that there are some people who are incredibly foolish, who always hold personal feelings toward those who are sent away, who always miss them, who speak on their behalf, who fight their corner, and who even weep and pray and beseech for them. What do you think about what these people do? (It's so foolish.) How is it foolish? (Those who leave are disbelievers, they don't accept the truth, and they are simply not worth praying for and not worth missing. Only those to whom God gives opportunities and who have hope of being saved are worth the tears and prayers of others. If someone prays for a disbeliever or a devil, then they're very foolish and ignorant.) One aspect is that they do not truly believe that there is a God—they are disbelievers; another**

aspect is that the nature essence of these people is that of a nonbeliever. What is the implied meaning here? It is that they are not people at all, but that their nature essence is that of a devil, of Satan, and that these people are opposed to God. This is how things are regarding their nature essence. Yet there is another aspect, and that is that God selects people, not devils. So, tell Me, are these devils God's chosen people, and are they selected by God? (No.) They are not God's chosen people, so if you always have emotional entanglements with these people and are sad to see them go, then doesn't that make you a fool? Doesn't that make you opposed to God? If you have no deep feelings toward true brothers and sisters and yet harbor deep feelings for these devils, then what are you? At the very least, you are muddleheaded, you don't view people according to God's words, you don't yet comport yourself with the correct standpoint, and you don't handle matters with principle.

You are a muddleheaded person” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). Concerning how people revealed as disbelievers should be regarded, God speaks very clearly. If they are obedient, submissive, and willing to labor, then even if they do not pursue the truth, they can remain to labor as long as they don't cause disruptions or disturbances. If they do not properly labor, becoming perfunctory or doing evil and disrupting or disturbing the church's work, not accepting or repenting when brothers and sisters expose and prune them, and causing more losses than gains when doing their duty, then they should be cleansed away. God saves man, and man's conscience should have a bottom line. Even if one doesn't pursue the truth, at the very least, they shouldn't cause disruptions or disturbances. The essence of everyone who is capable of doing evil and disrupting and disturbing the work of God's house is that of devils and Satan. Even if such people stay in the church, they won't serve a purpose. They need to be

cleansed away. I compared this to Li Ping's behavior: She had believed in God for many years, and after things happened to her, she didn't seek the truth and persistently over-analyzed people and things, disturbing the brothers and sisters and the church's work. Brothers and sisters fellowshiped with her and helped her many times, but she did not awaken or repent in the slightest. Her nature essence was one of being averse to and hating the truth, and she was an revealed disbeliever. Li Ping being cleansed away by the church completely revealed God's righteousness. In the past, when it came to judging Li Ping, I didn't judge her based on God's words, but on my own notions and imaginings. I thought that since she was able to forsake, expend herself, endure suffering, restrain herself, and display some good behavior, she was someone who had true belief in God. Therefore, with my good intentions, I wanted to get her to stay in the church. I was truly so blind! God never said that everyone who displayed some good behavior had true belief in God. God measures people based on their nature essence and their attitude toward the truth, as well as the path that they've walked all along. God's work has already arrived at the final stage of sorting people according to their kinds. People who love and can accept the truth, people who are averse to it and hate it, people who are wheat, and people who are weeds—God is going to reveal them all. Those disbelievers, evil people, and antichrists who are averse to and hate the truth will all be eliminated by God. Now, I was still able to feel sympathy for Li Ping who was revealed to be a disbeliever; was I not standing in opposition to God and resisting Him? I was truly so foolish! I ought to discern and reject her in my heart and promptly provide her behaviors of being a disbeliever to the church to safeguard the work of God's house. I could not be muddle-headed any longer! Soon afterward, I provided Li Ping's behaviors of being a disbeliever to the church, and before long, she was cleared out.

Experiencing this process of clearing out Li Ping, I gained some discernment toward disbelievers, as well as some understanding of the fallacious views within me. I understood that someone does not have true belief in God just because they display some good behavior. If someone does not love or accept the truth, they will sooner or later be revealed and eliminated. I saw that it was only accurate to discern people based on God's words.

29. Even the Elderly Should Strive to Pursue the Truth

By Li Jing, China

The year that I turned 46, I accepted Almighty God's work in the last days. From God's words I learned that this is the last stage of God's work to save people, that in the end, God will take those whom He saved into a new era. I felt especially excited, and I forsook and expended myself and did my duty with a hundred times more faith. At that time, I was pretty young, I had a lot of energy, and when I did my duty with young brothers and sisters, I didn't consider myself old at all. I sang and danced, full of life, and sometimes I would ride my bicycle about sixty miles to preach the gospel, without getting tired. I felt that expending myself for God and doing my duty like this would definitely lead to my being saved when God's work had ended. When I was 65, I got tinnitus in one of my ears, and there was often a humming in that ear. When it first started out, I didn't care much, and I thought that after a while it would get better. But later, it grew more and more serious; sometimes I couldn't hear clearly what other people were saying, and when it got serious I became dizzy. When I went to the hospital to get it looked at, the doctor said my ear was already useless, and there was no way to treat it. At that time, I felt especially negative, thinking, "I'm done for. This ear is deaf and I can't hear other people clearly, which will affect the performance of my duty. Of what use will I be in God's house then? If I can't do my duty, will I have any hope of attaining salvation? Will a deaf and farsighted person like me still be wanted in the kingdom?" The more I thought about it, the more despondent I became. I prayed to God and asked Him to bring me out of my negative state.

One day, I read this in God's words: **"All those who are willing to be made perfect have the chance to be made perfect, so everyone must relax: In the future you will all enter the destination. But if you are unwilling to be made perfect, and are unwilling to enter the wonderful realm, then that is your own problem. ... Every person has the chance to be made perfect: Provided that you are willing, provided that you pursue, in the end you will be able to achieve this result, and not one of you will be forsaken. If you are of poor caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your poor caliber; if you are of high caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your high caliber; if you are ignorant and illiterate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your illiteracy; if you are literate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with the fact that you are literate; if you are elderly, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your age; if you are capable of providing hospitality, My requirements of you will be in accordance with this capability; if you say you cannot offer hospitality, and can only perform a certain function, whether it be spreading the gospel, or taking care of the church, or attending to other general affairs, My perfection of you will be in accordance with the function that you perform. Being loyal, submitting to the very end, and seeking to have supreme love for God—this is what you must accomplish, and there are no better practices than these three things. Ultimately, man is required to achieve these three things, and if he can achieve them, then he will be made perfect. But, above all, you must truly pursue, you must actively press onward and upward, and not be passive in that regard"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). From within God's words I saw God's righteousness. God gives everyone the opportunity to attain

salvation and be made perfect. He doesn't save people based on their age, nor does He perfect people based on how many duties they fulfill; instead, He requires people to do duties based on their abilities, to pursue the truth and achieve loyalty and submission to Him, and to have a God-loving heart—this is what wins God's approval. No matter one's age or what duty they do, God wants their loyalty and submission. I didn't understand God's intention, and believed that because I was old and half deaf, and I couldn't do any duty, I would lose the hope of attaining salvation—these were my notions and imaginings. God says that elderly people should be following the requirements for the elderly. Although I was old and half deaf, I still had one ear that was able to listen to God's words; if I couldn't do an important duty, then I could do some other duty that I was capable of. Later, I preached the gospel together with the brothers and sisters of the church, and I felt pretty happy.

In March of 2023, I was in a car accident and my left leg was broken. While I was recovering at home, I lived in a constant state of anxiety: Now I was already 70 years old, and my health was already poor, my hearing gone, my vision worsening. Now, with my leg broken, what could I do in the future? I originally wanted to preach the gospel and show my loyalty, and I was preparing to do some good deeds. I never thought that my leg would be broken, and who knew when it would heal. If I couldn't do my duty in the future, would I still have any hope for salvation? The more I thought about it, the sadder I felt, and I started to complain in spite of myself, "Ever since I put my faith in the Lord, I expended myself fervently. After accepting God's work of the last days, I even closed my restaurant so that I could do my duty. I was almost arrested a few times and couldn't return to my home. For over 20 years I've been hustling and bustling, putting forth so much. I thought that if I kept on like this, I would receive

salvation, but I didn't expect that I wouldn't even be able to do my duty, with God's work about to end. Did I still have a hope of salvation? If I were ten or twenty years younger, I could do my duty for a longer time, and I would have some hope for salvation. Why was I born when I was? Now I'm getting older and older every year, and my body doesn't want to move anymore. What kind of hope will I have in the future?" When I saw the young brothers and sisters singing and dancing in videos, I felt especially envious, "These brothers and sisters were really born in a good decade, they're young, their strength is flourishing, and they have a good memory, they learn things quickly, and they can do a lot of duties. Now is the crucial time for God to perfect people, and when God's work is finished these young people will be more likely to attain salvation and survive. If I was born in the 80s or 90s, I would be in time. Why did I have to be born in the 50s? God's work is about to finish but I am old and I can't do my duty. I'll probably pass away any day now. What hope of salvation do I have?" During that time I felt especially despondent, and when I thought about it my heart broke and I shed tears. I watched the nonbelievers in my family busying themselves with eating, drinking, and entertainment; they tried to make me happy, but I couldn't cheer myself up at all. I felt that my life had no hope. Although I read God's words every day, I was only going through the motions, and my prayer was also ritualistic, so I felt that my heart had grown very far from God. I realized that my own state was incorrect, so I prayed to God, and asked Him to lead me out of this negative state.

One day, I read a passage in God's words that moved me tremendously. Almighty God says: **"There are also elderly people among brothers and sisters, who are aged from 60 up to around 80 or 90 and who, because of their advanced age, also experience some difficulties. Despite their age, their thinking is not necessarily so correct or**

rational, and their ideas and views do not necessarily accord with the truth. These elderly people have problems just the same, and they're always worrying, 'My health isn't so good anymore and I'm limited as to what duty I can perform. If I just perform this little duty, will God remember me? Sometimes I get sick, and I need someone to look after me. When there's no one to look after me, I'm not able to perform my duty, so what can I do? I'm old and I don't remember God's words when I read them and it's hard for me to understand the truth. When fellowshiping on the truth, I speak in a muddled and illogical way, and I haven't any experiences worth sharing. I'm old and I don't have enough energy, my eyesight isn't very good and I'm not strong anymore. Everything is difficult for me. Not only can I not perform my duty, but I easily forget things and get things wrong. Sometimes I get confused and I cause problems for the church and for my brothers and sisters. I want to attain salvation and pursue the truth but it's very hard. What can I do?' When they think of these things, they begin to fret, thinking, 'How come I only started believing in God at this age? How come I'm not like those who are in their 20s and 30s, or even those in their 40s and 50s? How come I only came across God's work now when I'm so old? It's not that my fate is bad; at least now I've encountered God's work. My fate is good, and God has been kind to me! There's just one thing that I'm not happy about, and that is that I'm too old. My memory isn't very good, and my health isn't that great, but I have a strong heart. It's just that my body doesn't obey me, and I get sleepy after listening for a while at gatherings. Sometimes I close my eyes to pray and fall asleep, and my mind wanders when I read God's words. After reading for a bit, I get sleepy and doze off, and the words don't sink in. What can I do? With such practical difficulties,

am I still able to pursue and understand the truth? If not, and if I'm not able to practice in line with the truth principles, then won't all my faith be in vain? Won't I fail to attain salvation? What can I do? I'm so worried! ...' ... They see young people able to eat and drink, to run and jump, and they feel envious. The more they see young people do such things, the more distressed they feel, thinking, 'I want to do my duty well and pursue and understand the truth, and I want to practice the truth, too, so why is it so hard? I'm so old and useless! Does God not want old people? Are old people really useless? Can we not attain salvation?' They're sad and unable to feel happy no matter how they think about it. They don't want to miss such a wonderful time and such a great opportunity, yet they're unable to expend themselves and perform their duty with all their heart and soul like young people do. These elderly people fall into deep distress, anxiety, and worry because of their age. Every time they encounter some difficulty, setback, hardship, or obstacle, they blame their age, and even hate themselves and have no liking for themselves. But in any case, it is to no avail, there is no solution, and they have no way forward. Could it be that they really have no way forward? Is there any solution? (Elderly people should also perform their duties as much as they're able.) It's acceptable for elderly people to perform their duties as much as they're able, right? Can elderly people not pursue the truth anymore because of their age? Are they not capable of understanding the truth? (Yes, they are.) Can elderly people understand the truth? They can understand some, and not even young people can understand it all, either. Elderly people always have a misconception, believing that they're confused, that their memory is bad, and so they can't understand the truth. Are they right? (No.) Although young people have much more energy than

elderly people, and are physically stronger, actually their capacity to understand, comprehend, and know is just the same as that of elderly people. Weren't elderly people once young as well? They weren't born old, and young people will all grow old one day, too. Elderly people mustn't always be thinking that because they're old, physically weak, unwell, and with bad memories, they're different from young people. In fact, there is no difference. What do I mean when I say there is no difference? Whether someone is old or young, their corrupt dispositions are the same, their attitudes and views on all manner of things are the same, and their perspectives and standpoints on all manner of things are the same. ... So, it is not that elderly people have nothing to do, nor are they unable to perform their duties, much less are they unable to pursue the truth—there are many things for them to do. The various heresies and fallacies that you have accumulated during your lifetime, as well as the various traditional ideas and notions, ignorant and stubborn things, conservative things, irrational things, and distorted things that you have accumulated have all piled up in your heart, and you should spend even more time than young people to dig out, dissect, and recognize these things. It's not the case that you have nothing to do, or that you should feel distressed, anxious, and worried when you are at a loose end—this is neither your task nor your responsibility. First of all, elderly people should have the correct mindset. Although you may be getting on in years and you are relatively aged physically, still you should have a young mindset. Although you're getting old, your thinking is slowed and your memory is poor, if you can still know yourself, still understand the words I say, and still understand the truth, then that proves you are not old and that your caliber is not lacking. If someone is in their 70s but is not able to

understand the truth, then this shows that their stature is too small and not up to the task. Therefore, age is irrelevant when it comes to the truth” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). God knows that we elderly people will find ourselves in this state, so He expresses these words to show us a path of practice. This shows that God has so much love for us. God scrutinizes the human heart, and these words of God talk about my true state. When I saw how agile the minds of the young brothers and sisters were, how much their strength flourished, able to do every duty in God’s house, I felt envy deep down, and I thought that they were right on time for God to perfect people, while at my age, with my poor vision, hearing loss, and poor memory, I couldn’t remember what I read in God’s words. Especially now that my leg was broken, and I couldn’t do my duty, I felt that there was no hope left in my life, and my chances of getting saved were getting lower. Therefore, I often lived in a negative state and felt pessimistic and hopeless. God’s words pointed out a path of practice for me: It’s not that once people grow old and can’t do their duties, they have no path to walk anymore. If they’re old and can’t go out and do their duty, they can still pursue the truth and resolve their corrupt disposition. It’s like when I didn’t submit to old age, but forced myself to keep up with young people—this was my arrogant disposition. I always felt that once I became old I wouldn’t be able to do important duties, so I worried that I wouldn’t be saved. I was always making demands of God and I couldn’t submit to His sovereignty and arrangements—this was also my corrupt disposition. Also, while I was doing my duty, I was constantly pursuing reputation and status, and wanting people to admire me. All of these were my corrupt dispositions, and I needed to reflect on and know them, seeking the truth to resolve them. Besides, after believing in God for so many years, I had some experiential knowledge of God’s words. Although I couldn’t go out and do

my duty, I could stay at home and write experiential articles to bear witness to God. Wouldn't this also be doing some duty? Moreover, although young people have good memories, and their minds, reflexes, and actions are quick, this doesn't mean that they don't have any corrupt disposition. Just like elderly people, they need to experience the judgment and chastisement of God's words. Though I was now old, I still had a lot of corrupt dispositions which I needed to seek the truth to resolve. This was all something I ought to do.

I read more of God's words: **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). **"In the current stream, all those who truly love God have the opportunity to be perfected by Him. Whether they are young or old, as long as they have a heart that submits to Him and fears Him, they can be perfected by Him. God perfects people according to their different functions. So long as you exert all of your strength, and submit to the work of God, you can be perfected by Him. At present, none of you is perfect. Sometimes you are capable of performing one type of function, and other times you can perform two. Just as long as you do your utmost to expend yourself for God, you will ultimately be perfected by Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. On Everyone Performing Their Function). From God's words, I understood that God does not determine people's outcomes and destinations based on their age or how much they suffered, but on whether or not they have the truth, and whether their life disposition has changed. In the past, I always believed

that the strength of young people flourished, and their minds were quick, they accepted new things quickly, and could do many duties in God's house—this kind of person could have hope of being saved. Especially when I saw a lot of young people being promoted, I thought that elderly people were not useful in God's house, God didn't want them, and they had no hope for salvation. I viewed God's house as a factory from the world of nonbelievers, and believed that young people would stay, but the elderly and useless people would not be wanted—this was my misunderstanding of God, and it was blasphemy against Him. In fact, God's house promotes people because of the needs of the gospel work, and every item of work needs all kinds of specialized people to collaborate. The fact that elderly people can't do some duties doesn't mean that God doesn't want people once they grow old, and it certainly doesn't mean that they don't have any hope for salvation. In God's eyes, it doesn't matter whether one is young or old, they are all equal—it's just that people's ages differ, and their physical conditions are not the same, but God requires all people to enter into the truth just the same. I saw that God is righteous, He does not assess people based on their age, but on whether or not they can pursue the truth and gain the truth. If one doesn't pursue the truth and lacks principles in how they handle matters, even if they are young, possess caliber, and do an important duty, it is all in vain, and they are still resisting God. Although I am old, and I can't do any important duty, I can still understand God's words, and my mind and reason are still normal, so I should pursue the truth and treasure every day that I am alive, so that I can bear fruit.

Later, I came across another passage of God's words: **“Which of you is performing your duty in God's house right now by accident? Whatever background you came from to perform your duty, none of it was by chance. This duty can't be performed by just finding a few**

believers at random; this was something predestined by God before the ages. What does it mean for something to be predestined? What specifically? It means that in His entire management plan, God long ago planned how many times you would be on earth, which lineage and which family you would be born into during the last days, what the circumstances of this family would be, whether you would be male or female, what your strengths would be, what level of education you would have, how articulate you would be, what your caliber would be, and what you would look like. He planned the age that you would come to God's house and begin performing your duty and what duty you would perform at what time. God predestined each step for you early on. When you weren't yet born and when you came to earth in your last several lives, God had already arranged for you what duty you would be performing in this final stage of work. This is certainly no joke! The fact that you're able to hear a sermon here was preordained by God. This is not to be taken lightly!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's words, I understood that God had ordained what year I would be born in and when I would come to believe in Him. As for whether I would later be able to do my duty, and what kind of destination and fate I would have, these are all in God's hands. I always complained that I wasn't born in a good decade—I wasn't being submissive at all, and I was being too arrogant and unreasonable. I was born in the 50s, yet the fact that I made it in time for God to appear and do work in the last days, being fortunate enough to hear God's words and see His appearance, and to accept His watering and shepherding, following God for so many years up to today—this already speaks of God's great grace and exaltation toward me. As for those nonbelievers who were the same age as I was: They lived their whole lives without knowing why they came to this earth

or why people must live. Their whole lives they only knew to make money, compete with other people, and enjoy the flesh—they struggled in their sin. But I could come before God and understand some truths, I could know why people live and what kind of life is valuable, and know that people's fate is under God's control, and the duty that people should do, and the destination of humanity, etc. I enjoyed such great grace and blessings from God, yet I still wasn't satisfied, and I even complained why God didn't allow me to be born in the 80s or 90s. I reasoned and argued with God. I really had no humanity at all! God did so much work in me, He orchestrated people, events, and things for me to experience, and when I felt negative God had the brothers and sisters fellowship with me, and time after time He enlightened and guided me through His words, and made me understand His intentions and walk out of negativity—wasn't all of this God's love? When I thought about these things, I felt guilty and I believed that I really didn't have a conscience. So I prayed to God, saying, "God, I have failed to appreciate Your kindness. You treated me graciously, yet I always misunderstood You. Now that my leg is broken, I have finally reflected; otherwise, I would still have thought that I could receive blessings by running around and preaching the gospel, living in my own notions and resisting You without knowing it. Whatever You do in the future, whatever my outcome may be, that is Your righteousness—I submit to Your sovereignty." When I understood God's intention, my state changed somewhat for the better. Later, I practiced writing articles at home, and quieted my heart before God, practicing self-reflection. A few months later, my leg gradually improved, I was able to start walking again and take up my duty. While I was doing my duty, I also placed emphasis on seeking the truth and resolving my own corrupt dispositions, and didn't feel constrained or bound by my age anymore. I could treat these things correctly.

These few years, I always felt constrained by my age. If it weren't for the guidance of God's words, I wouldn't have come out of it at all. It was God's words that made the heavy stone in my heart fall out, so that I no longer felt worried or anxious about not being saved or receiving a good outcome because of my old age. My heart found freedom and release.

30. The Crucible of Prison

By Li Xin, China

From a young age, I've always had a weak constitution and been prone to illness. From as early as I can remember, I've suffered from daily headaches and at the age of twelve, I developed heart disease. After that, I also suffered from gastrointestinal illness and bronchitis. Due to being plagued by multiple illnesses, I found life to be terribly miserable. At the age of 24, I began believing in the Lord Jesus and would often read the Bible and pray to the Lord. I began to feel a sense of serenity and joy from my faith, and my illnesses improved greatly without me even noticing. To repay the Lord's love, I began spreading the Lord's gospel and looked forward to the day when the Lord would return. In 1999, I finally heard God's voice and welcomed the Lord Jesus' return. Seeing how Almighty God had appeared to do work and express many truths to save mankind from the fetters of sin, allowing them to escape the disasters and guiding man into God's kingdom, I felt incredibly excited and joined the gospel-spreading ranks, hoping to spread the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to even more people.

One day in March of 2003, I was arrested by the police while spreading the gospel. After they searched me and found a pager and a notebook, one asked me, "Where did this pager come from?" When I told him it was my personal pager, he then picked up a plastic pipe and viciously beat me with it several times before picking me up and throwing me in the back of a car. The police then took turns savagely slapping me across the face while yelling, "This is what you get for going around spreading the gospel! We've got you now!" I was extremely frightened and hurriedly prayed to God, asking Him to protect me and give me faith and strength.

When we arrived at the county public security bureau, the police dragged me to an empty room and threw me on a metal sheet. It was still very cold in northeast China in March and I was so cold that I shivered continuously. I told the police, “I have heart disease and I am getting injections and taking medication for it. I can’t be exposed to cold.” The police just ignored me. All I could do was curl myself up in a ball, hugging my chest tightly with my arms, but not long after that, I became so cold that I continually convulsed and my teeth kept chattering. Only after the police poked me with a needle in my hands and nose did I finally recover and stop convulsing. Later on, they carried me to another room, threw me on a chair and went out to eat. I was a little afraid and worried how the police would torture me when they returned. I continually prayed to God, asking for His protection. In the midst of my prayer, I recalled this passage of God’s words: **“You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). I thought, “Yes, I should suffer hardship and bear witness to God before Satan, as God approves of this.” I also thought of how Satan had tempted Job. When Job lost all his property and his children in a single night and his body broke out in boils, he was still able to praise God’s name despite such great suffering, which ultimately led to Satan’s humiliation and failure. God allowed me to encounter this environment to test me and perfect my faith. No matter what the police did to me, I knew I had to stand firm in my witness for God.

The police quickly returned and without saying a single word, they began slapping me in the face. They were not satisfied with just slapping me with their hands, they also picked up their shoes and began beating my

face, head and body with the soles of their shoes. At first, it was very painful and I felt some discomfort in my heart. I gritted my teeth and tried to withstand the pain while tears came streaming down my face. After some time, my face went numb from being hit repeatedly and I no longer felt pain. One of them took a plastic tube over a meter long and began beating my body while grilling me with questions, “How many members does your church have? Who is your church’s leader? Speak now!” I didn’t say a word and he got even more angry and brought a hard blow down on my head, which immediately left my ears ringing. After that, they took me to another room where I saw two sisters from my gathering curled up on a bench in the corner. The captain of the National Security Brigade pointed at the two sisters and said to me, “Do you know these two?” I said, “No.” This made him so angry that he picked up a plastic tube and hit me hard over the head with it before raining down punches and kicks on me, leaving no part of my body unscathed. I became dazed and confused. Another policeman then asked me, “Where did this pager and notebook come from? What are they for?” While saying this, he picked up the plastic tube and prepared to hit me again. I was very afraid that I wouldn’t be able to take such torture and would rat out my brothers and sisters, so I continually prayed to God in my heart. I recalled God’s words which say: **“You must give everything you have to protect My testimony. This shall be the goal of your actions—do not forget this”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). I had to put my life on the line to stand firm in my witness for God. No matter what cruelty the police inflicted on me, I could not betray God. Just then, a policeman punched me, knocking me down to the floor before hitting me over the head with the plastic tube, which left my head ringing. He then savagely beat me on the head and body, leaving streaks of blood all over my body. My heart palpitated in violent

convulsions and it felt like my heart was beating in my throat. I thought that I would die at any moment. I felt a bit weak and wondered: If they kept beating me like this, would I actually be beaten to death? Just then, I once more recalled God's words: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). My life was in God's hands. No matter how savage the police were, they couldn't do anything to me without God's permission. Even if they did beat me to death, I wouldn't have betrayed God, would have stood firm in my witness and my soul would not have yet died. If I sold out my brothers and sisters like Judas just to avoid the temporary suffering of my flesh and offended God's disposition, not only would I feel guilty later, I would also go to hell after death and my soul would be condemned to eternal damnation. Realizing all this, I felt a bit more at peace and wasn't as afraid. Just then, the police concluded their beating. I said I had to go to the bathroom, but the captain just glared at me and said, "You're not going anywhere!" before kicking me in the lower abdomen. The kick caused me to become incontinent and my cotton-padded pants were soon drenched with urine.

The same day, the police sent me and the other two sisters to a detention center. I couldn't stand up straight and had to hobble forward with my hands supporting my belly. The guard, an elderly man, had seen enough and said, "They are just believers in God. They didn't do anything wrong, so why were they beaten like this?" He gave each of us a light blanket, and we had to sleep on the cold floor. My pants still hadn't dried out, I was absolutely freezing and curled up in the fetal position. Later, the old man brought me some medicine and a cup of warm water. I knew that this was

God taking mercy on my weakness and arranging for this man to come help us. I felt thankful to God in my heart. The next day, the police took one of the sisters away for interrogation. We were very worried and continually prayed for her. We felt constantly on edge every day. After three days and two nights, the sister was finally returned to us. As she limped over to her bed, bent at the waist, we rushed to her side. I saw that her entire body was covered in bruises, and that her feet were black and blue and had swollen up like balloons. The sister said that after being taken away, she was continually beaten by the police. Four or five policemen took turns punching and kicking her and also handcuffed her hands behind her back and violently jerked her hands upward, leaving her in so much pain that she passed out several times. The police splashed her with dirty kitchen water to wake her up and would continue beating her. They didn't give her any food or water for the entire three days and two nights. I was absolutely outraged: This gang of demons had treated her so inhumanely! However, I was also extremely scared. My previous injuries had not yet healed and I didn't know how the police would torture me going forward. Would I be able to take it? I continually prayed to God in my heart and asked Him to give me strength.

At 8 a.m. on the third day after my sister returned, the captain of the National Security Brigade came to interrogate me. A policeman handcuffed me, pushed down on my neck to make me bend at the waist and pushed me forward. Another policeman kicked me in the groin from behind so hard that I almost fell over. They pushed me into a small room that contained a single bed and handcuffed me to a railing at the head of the bed. I had no idea what torture was in store for me, and my heart was beating up into my throat. With a sinister laugh, the captain said to one of the policemen, "Put some kyushin heart tonic pills in her mouth and make her swallow them.

That way, she won't die so easily when we beat her. We've got to get an answer out of her today." They then forcefully stuffed the pills in my mouth and began beating me with plastic tubes from head to toe, not even letting the instep of my feet go unbeaten. With each strike, I convulsed in pain. As they beat me, they grilled me on the church. I was worried I wouldn't be able to take their torture, so I hurriedly prayed to God for help. I thought of God's words which say: **"Those whom God refers to as 'overcomers' are those who are still able to stand firm in their witness and maintain their confidence and devotion to God when under the influence of Satan and while being laid siege to by Satan, that is, when they find themselves amidst the forces of darkness. If you are still able to keep a pure heart before God and maintain your genuine love for God no matter what, then you are standing firm in your witness in front of God, and this is what God refers to as being an 'overcomer'"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). God's words made me realize that God uses the arrest, persecution, and torture of the great red dragon to perfect our faith and make us into a group of overcomers. Being apprehended by the police and subjected to torture was God's way of trying and testing me and it was an opportunity to bear witness to God. No matter how the police tormented me, even if they beat me to death, I would never betray God or sell out my brothers and sisters. The police continued asking me who our church's leader was, and then took their plastic tubes and savagely beat my whole body again. I curled up in a ball on my side, gritted my teeth, and didn't say a word. After interrogating me all morning and seeing I wasn't going to say anything, they threatened in exasperation, "If you don't tell us anything, we'll slap you with a ten- or twenty-year sentence and you won't be going anywhere!" After that, they took me back to the cell where they kept us. During the interrogation, I was beaten all

over and covered in bruises, but seeing the police with that defeated look on their faces and nothing to show for themselves made me so happy. I continually thanked God for His protection, which allowed me to survive this brush with death.

On our fifteenth day at the detention center, the police took the three of us out into the yard. One of them said, "Let the dogs loose!" Then, in a sinister voice, he added, "We'll see if you talk now!" At that moment, two police dogs suddenly came bounding out from the side of the yard with their long tongues hanging out and their heads raised high, charging directly at us. When they got to where the three of us were standing, they began running in circles around us. I was extremely frightened and thought, "Will these dogs bite us to death?" I hurriedly prayed to God. During prayer, I recalled the story of Daniel, who despite being thrown into a lion's den, had not died because God was with him and shut the mouths of the lions, preventing them from biting him. I also recalled God's words, which say: **"You should not be afraid of this and that; no matter how many difficulties and dangers you might face, you are capable of remaining steady before Me, unobstructed by any hindrance, so that My will may be carried out unimpeded. This is your duty.... Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road? Remember this! Do not forget! All that occurs is by My goodwill, and everything is under My observation. Can you follow My word in all that you say and do? When the trials of fire come upon you, will you kneel down and call out? Or will you cower, incapable of moving forward?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). God's words gave me faith. God is my support, and without His permission, the dogs could do nothing to me. My anxiety slowly faded and I had faith that everything was in God's hands. Amazingly, the dogs just sniffed at us,

wagged their tails and left. I breathed a deep sigh of relief, continually thanked God in my heart, and my faith in Him grew even stronger.

After that, the police took us to a jail. We met three other sisters in the cell who had also all been beaten badly all over their bodies. Two days later, we were interrogated individually in turns. They took me to a small room and grilled me on various details of the church. When I wouldn't tell them anything, they kicked me down and made me kneel on the ground, before standing on the backs of my calves and yanking my hair to pull my head backward hard. After that, a policeman straddled my neck, grabbed my hair and pulled my hair back and forth for over ten minutes. When he got off me, he began feeling his private parts and making vulgar motions while looking at me with a lascivious stare. I turned my head away in disgust and thought, "How can he call himself a policeman? He's a scoundrel, a beast!" After that, he pointed to the drugs in the drawer and said, "We have every kind of drug you can think of in here. One injection and we can turn you into a psycho or a vegetable. No one will treat you like a person after that." With a sinister laugh, he continued, "The CCP upholds an atheist and materialist philosophy, we've got to weed out believers like you. If you don't give us some information, we'll use these drugs on you." As he spoke, he retrieved a cigarette from the drawer, lit it and then placed it under my nose so the smoke went up my nostrils causing me to cough and feel dizzy and nauseous. He then said, "There is a drug in this cigarette that will make you involuntarily tell me everything you know." This frightened me quite a bit. If I really were drugged and sold out my brothers and sisters, wouldn't that make me a Judas? And what if their injections caused me to lose my sanity or become a vegetable? How would I live then? I continually prayed to God, "Oh God. I do not want to become a Judas. On my own, I cannot overcome the police's torment. Please guide and protect me." Just then, I

recalled a passage of God's words: **"Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). Indeed, God holds sovereignty over all things. My life was in His hands and whether or not I would develop a mental illness or become a vegetable was all up to Him. I had to have faith in God. After all, I didn't seem to be affected at all by the drugged cigarette the policeman was forcing me to inhale and remained very awake. This showed me that God was always with me, protecting and looking after me. I couldn't help but give thanks to God in my heart and felt less frightened. After the cigarette had burned down about two thirds of the way, the policeman saw that I still seemed to be quite awake and alert and angrily threw the cigarette to the ground and sighed saying, "Send this one to prison!" On the morning of 13 May, a policeman said to me, "Your belief in God violates the laws of the CCP. You have been charged with disturbing public order and have been sentenced to two years of reeducation through labor." I was fairly upset when I heard him say that. Two months of incarceration had already been unbearable, and I had no idea how I would get through two years of reeducation through labor. The policeman continued, saying, "Don't bother making an appeal. There is no shortage of wrongful sentencings in this world and you're not the only one. Even if you appeal, you'll never win a case against the CCP." Hearing him spout devilish words, I was even more clear about the evil, ugly essence of the CCP. Two days later, I was sent to a labor camp.

At the labor camp, I was incarcerated together with nine other sisters. Every morning, we had to get up at 5 a.m., and after morning exercises, we were made to start knitting mats. If we were too slow, we would be yelled at, and if we didn't finish our tasks, we would be punished. Sometimes we

had to work through the night and sometimes would even go three days and three nights without sleep. I never ate a full meal during my time in the labor camp, and was in a perpetual state of fatigue, sleep-deprivation and hunger. I would often fall asleep while standing up. The guard would often pick on us because we were believers. I suffered from frequent urination and when I asked to go to the bathroom, the two head prisoners who had been instigated by the guard would intentionally jeer at me, saying, “This isn’t your house, you can’t just go whenever you want! Hold it in!” I would hold it in for so long that I could barely walk, worrying that if I moved too quickly, I would lose control and have an accident. I ended up having to take one step at a time, slowly moving my way over to the bathroom. But when I finally got to the bathroom, I’d be unable to urinate. It was awful. One day, a sixty-year-old sister had a heart attack due to being overworked and collapsed on the floor, foaming at the mouth. The guard not only didn’t help her, he actually kicked her twice. When she awoke, he forced her to continue working. Another time, a head prisoner said a sister’s work was not up to standard despite it clearly being up to standard. The guard said the sister was being passive, slacking off and refusing to do labor and punished her by putting her in a smaller cell, hanging her up and beating her for two days straight. After that, she was brought on a stage at the cafeteria and forced to engage in self-criticism in front of everyone. When I saw the deep, black and blue marks from the handcuffs on the sister’s wrists, I became enraged. Just because of our faith, the great red dragon arrested us, and beat us as they pleased, and sent us for reeducation through labor, abusing us to no end. They weren’t giving us believers any chance of surviving! Just then, I thought of a hymn of God’s words titled “**Those in Darkness Should Rise Up**”:

1 For thousands of years this has been the land of filth. It is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations, being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. Who can see the world beyond the skies? How could the people of a ghost town such as this ever have seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God's eager intentions?

2 Why put up such an impenetrable obstacle to the work of God? Why employ various tricks to deceive God's folk? Where is the true freedom and the legitimate rights and interests? Where is the fairness? Where is the comfort? Where is the warmth? Why use deceitful schemes to trick God's people? Why suppress the work of God? Why hound God until He has nowhere to rest His head? Why do you reject the arrival of God? Why are you so unconscionable? Are you willing to endure the injustices in a dark society such as this?

Now is the time: Man has long since gathered all his strength, he has devoted all his efforts and paid every price for this, to tear off the hideous face of this devil and allow people, who have been blinded, and who have endured every manner of suffering and hardship, to rise up from their pain and rebel against this evil old devil.

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)

I saw with unquestionable certainty that the CCP is a demon that hates the truth and takes God as its enemy; I made up my mind to completely

rebel against the CCP, stand firm in my witness for God and humiliate the great red dragon.

Later, we were assigned to making fake eyelashes and had to work overtime every night. Due to the long working hours, my eyesight became blurry and my hands shook while holding the forceps. I had a weak constitution to start with and, due to being overly fatigued, my condition worsened by the day. I would often run a fever, but had to continue working while sick. And even going to the bathroom was an issue—the head prisoner would intentionally pick on me and only let me go once I started crying from holding it in too long. I felt incredibly depressed and miserable and didn't know how I would make it through those two years. Sometimes I'd feel so aggrieved that I'd feel like crying and sometimes I'd think about killing myself. During that period, I would often pray to God and recalled this passage of His words: **“When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith. No matter what your actual stature is, you must first possess both the will to suffer hardship and true faith, and you must also have the will to rebel against the flesh. You should be willing to endure personal hardships and suffer losses to your personal interests in order to satisfy God's intentions. You must also be capable of feeling regret about yourself in your heart: In the past, you were unable to satisfy God, and now, you**

can regret yourself. You must not be lacking in any of these regards—it is through these things that God will perfect you. If you cannot meet these criteria, then you cannot be perfected” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). In the past, I often said I was willing to emulate Job and Peter, and would stand firm in my witness to satisfy God no matter how terrible the trials I faced were. But now that I was actually faced with this situation, I realized that I had just been reciting slogans and doctrines and didn’t have true faith and submission to God. Satan was tormenting my flesh to try to make me stray from and betray God, but God was using this difficult environment to reveal my deficiencies and perfect my faith and love. I had to rely on God to experience this environment and no matter how much I suffered, I had to satisfy God. Once I submitted to the environment, I didn’t think it was that much of a suffering anymore. Later on, the doctor at the labor camp gave me a physical examination and found that I had severe tachycardia and advanced heart illness. After that, the guard didn’t assign me extra work. I knew that God was opening up a way for me and I thanked Him from the bottom of my heart. Under God’s protection, I made it through one year and ten months of incarceration.

Thinking back on my experience, every time I thought I couldn’t make it through the torture and torment, God’s words gave me faith and strength, guiding me through hardship after hardship. It was only with God’s protection and love that I was able to survive the torture of the great red dragon and walk out of the devilish prison alive despite having a weak constitution and suffering from several illnesses! Thanks be to Almighty God!

31. I Can Correctly Regard My Caliber

By Shelly, USA

In April of 2023, I was selected as the watering team leader. As the newcomers gradually increased, I also needed to check up on the overall work of the team. It felt like there wasn't enough time in a day. Sometimes, when I checked up on the work of brothers and sisters, I would spend less time on watering newcomers myself, and sometimes, when I prioritized watering newcomers, I wouldn't check up on the team work closely enough. I was never able to balance all tasks. This situation made me anxious, and I feared the leader would say my working capability was no good and my caliber was poor. I was especially afraid that I would be reassigned from my duty as a team leader. Among the brothers and sisters whom I was acquainted with in the past, some of them had gone on to be leaders, and some became supervisors. Meanwhile, I was only a team leader, and was facing the danger of being reassigned. I felt somewhat discontent. Was I really going to be this mediocre my whole life? Did I really not have the caliber of a leader or supervisor? I remembered that the brothers and sisters had talked about how planning one's time reasonably could improve their efficiency in their duty, and a ray of hope lit up my heart. Couldn't I also use this method to improve my working capability? Moreover, when I endured suffering and paid a price in my duty, would God not favor me and improve my caliber and working capability? Thinking of this, I hurried to take action. I wrote out my schedule every day, keeping a record of which work I was doing each hour and doing my best to maximize my time. After working hard for some time, I didn't see much of an improvement in the results of my duty. At the time, I was quite upset; why couldn't I improve? Why did God favor other brothers and

sisters and give them good calibers, making them qualified for duties like being leaders and supervisors? As for me, I had worked hard for so long, and just being a team leader was already so strenuous. Did God really not favor me? Especially when problems emerged or the results were poor in my duty, I felt even more depressed and negative. I speculated that it wouldn't be long before I was dismissed. One time, my supervisor learned about my state and said to me, "The burden weighing on your heart is too great. Your caliber and working capability can't compare to the brothers and sisters with good caliber, but you have your strong points, like how when you run into problems and difficulties in your duty, you're able to purely open yourself and seek. You can also help everyone when it comes to life entry. All you've got to do is give free rein to your strengths and do your duty well." Yes, I felt that my life was too exhausting, and that I was exerting lots of unnecessary pressure on myself.

One day, I read God's words: **"You think that the more you are able to transcend, surpassing the range of your own caliber and abilities, it proves that it is more the work of God; that if your sincerity and your will to cooperate grow increasingly greater, then that means God works in you more and more, and that your caliber and abilities are growing increasingly greater. Is this not a notion and imagining people have? (Yes.) Are you especially inclined to think this way? (Yes.) What is the result of thinking this way? Is it not always failure and an absence of materialization? Some people are even negative, saying, 'I have given my utmost sincerity to God, why doesn't God grant me better caliber? Why doesn't God give me transcendent abilities? Why am I still always weak? My caliber has not improved, I can't see anything clearly, and I become confused when faced with complex matters. It was like this before, why is it still the same now? Additionally, in my performance of**

my duty and my handling of problems, why can I never transcend my flesh? I understand some doctrines, but still, I cannot see things clearly, and when it comes to dealing with matters, I remain indecisive. I am still not as good as those of high caliber; my ability to do work is also poor, and my performance of duty is inefficient. My caliber has not improved at all! What's going on? Could it be that my sincerity toward God is insufficient? Or does God not like me? Where am I lacking?' Some people search for various reasons and have tried many approaches to change this fact, such as listening to more sermons, memorizing more of God's words, writing more spiritual devotion notes, as well as listening to people fellowship the truth more, and seeking more, but the final result is still disappointing. Their caliber and work capability remain as before, without any improvement even after believing in God for three to five years" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). **"If you always believe that the purpose of God working and speaking to supply people with the truth is to change all these innate qualities of humans, and think that only then can one be considered a completely reborn, truly new person as spoken of by God, then you are gravely mistaken. This is a human notion and imagining. After understanding this, you should let go of such notions, imaginings, speculations, or feelings. That is, in the process of pursuing the truth, you should not always rely on feelings or guesses to sum up these things: 'Has my caliber improved? Have my innate qualities changed? Is my personality still as bad as before? Have my lifestyle habits changed?' Do not ponder over these; such pondering is futile, because these are not the aspects God intends to change, and God's words and work have never targeted these things. God's work has never aimed to change people's caliber, innate qualities, personality,**

and so on, nor has God spoken for the purpose of changing these aspects of people. In other words, God's work supplies people with the truth on the basis of their inherent conditions, aiming to make people understand the truth and then accept and submit to the truth. Regardless of what kind of caliber you have, and regardless of what your personality and innate qualities are like, what God wants to do is to work the truth into you, to change your old notions and corrupt dispositions, rather than changing your inherent caliber, innate qualities, and personality. You understand now what God's work aims to change, right? (God's work aims to change the old notions and corrupt dispositions within people.) Now that you understand this truth, you should let go of those transcendent, unrealistic imaginings and notions, and should not use these notions and imaginings to measure yourself or make demands of yourself. Instead, you should seek and accept the truth based on the various inherent conditions given to you by God. What is the ultimate goal in this? It is that on the basis of your inherent conditions, you understand the truth principles, understand each and every truth principle that should be practiced in the face of various situations you encounter, and you can view people and matters, and conduct yourself and handle matters according to these truth principles. Doing this meets God's requirements" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). After reading God's words, it suddenly dawned on me that I was living according to my notions and imaginings. I thought that if someone sincerely believed in God, did their duty attentively, endured suffering, and paid a price, God would favor them, helping their caliber and working capabilities see improvement and enabling the results of their duties to surpass their original caliber and working capabilities. Even though such a person's caliber was poor, they

could still do leadership and supervising duties in the church, becoming one of the pillars there. So, even though I did things slowly and was of poor working capability, I thought that as long as I did my duty attentively, endured suffering, and paid a price, God would favor me. Thus, I wanted to use writing out a daily schedule, planning my time, enduring suffering, and paying a price as a way to improve my caliber and working capability. However, after working hard for a while, my caliber and working capability hadn't improved like I'd imagined, and I grew negative and depressed. I thought that God was not favoring me or working on me. Now, after reading God's words, I understood that God's work is not transcendent, but practical. My caliber is a product of God's predetermination. God works to help people enter the truth, cast off their corrupt dispositions, and live out true human likeness. He does not work to change people's caliber and working capabilities. When people do their duties sincerely and seek the truth, they can obtain the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit and break through some of the barriers in their duty. However, all of this is based on the foundation of people's given caliber, and is something people can be up to the task for if they just work hard. There is no person of poor given caliber who has come to possess the caliber of a leader due to obtaining the work of the Holy Spirit. These were all my notions and imaginings. I realized that if believers in God did not seek the truth and only pursued according to their notions and imaginings, they would not only be unable to understand the truth and do their duty well, but also run counter to God's demands.

A while later, due to work demands, my supervisor arranged for me to go to another church to water newcomers. The sister I was partnered with before had become a church supervisor, and meanwhile I was only a waterer. I suddenly felt there was a great distance between me and her.

Although I knew that people's caliber was not changed in God's work, I was unwilling to accept this and was dissatisfied with my caliber. I thought those with good calibers were people that the church would promote and cultivate and were also pillars of the church. Only such people had bright prospects and were thought highly of by others. Meanwhile, those with poor calibers could only do a bit of peripheral work and were looked down on by people and disliked by God. I didn't want to be labeled as someone with "poor caliber." I thought that once such a label was attached to me, it was tantamount to acknowledging that I was worthless scum. I'd have no prospects whatsoever! That wouldn't do at all; I'd have to keep trying. Even if I wasn't able to improve my caliber much, it'd be alright if, through suffering and paying a price in my duty, I could just get my caliber to be about the same level as others. So, I then hurriedly threw myself into my work and actively cooperated. When I achieved something, I was very happy, and I would eagerly tell the brothers and sisters about it, hoping to gain their approval. However, later on, I ran into some unresolvable difficulties when watering newcomers, and there were also some tasks that I neglected. I was disheartened and sad. It seemed that my caliber was truly no good. Those days, I was already working very hard, but I still wasn't doing a good job. Forget it, I thought; no matter how hard I worked, it wouldn't change. Poor caliber is an incurable illness. Without my noticing, I once again became negative and passive when doing my duty, and I didn't want to put thought into resolving the problems in my work. I even wanted to evade my responsibility, thinking that I was doing my duty poorly due to my limited caliber, and that there was nothing I could do. During that period of time, I felt a bit dazed, and when I read God's words, I was unable to calm down. When I prayed, I didn't know what to say to God. I was always feeling depressed.

One day, during my devotional, I read two passages of God's words: **"Do not challenge yourself, nor seek to push your limits. God knows what your caliber and abilities are like. What caliber and abilities God has given you have long been predetermined by Him. Always wanting to transcend these is to be arrogant and to overestimate oneself, which is asking for trouble and will inevitably end in failure. Are such people not neglecting their proper tasks? (Yes.) They are not conducting themselves in a well-behaved manner, not holding fast to their proper positions to fulfill the duties of a created being, not following these principles in their actions, but always trying to show off. There's a two-part saying: 'An old lady puts on lipstick—to give you something to look at.' For what purpose would the 'old lady' do this? (To show herself off.) The old lady wants to draw people's attention, as if saying, 'I, as an old lady, am not ordinary—I'll show you something special.' She does not want to be looked down upon, but instead wants to be admired and revered; she wants to challenge her limits and surpass herself. Is this not having an arrogant nature? (Yes.) If you have an arrogant nature, then you are not well-behaved, you do not want to conduct yourself in a manner befitting your station. You always want to challenge yourself. Whatever others can do, you want to do as well. When others stand out, achieve results, or make contributions, and receive everyone's praise, you feel uncomfortable, jealous, and discontented. You then want to abandon your current tasks to undertake work that allows you to shine, also desiring to be highly regarded. But you are not capable of doing such prominent tasks, so isn't this a waste of time? Isn't this neglecting your proper tasks? (Yes.) Do not neglect proper tasks, for neglecting them ultimately yields no good results. Not only does it waste time, making others look down on**

you, but it also incurs God's loathing, and in the end, you only make **yourself quite negative**" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). **"God observes whether you conduct yourself in a manner befitting your station, and whether you are someone who does the duties of a created being well. He observes in your performance of your duty whether you put all your heart and effort into it under the inherent conditions God has given you, and whether you act according to principles to achieve the results God desires. If you can do all of these things, God gives you full marks. If you don't do things in accordance with God's requirements, then despite the fact that you may make an effort and put in the work, if everything you do is to flaunt and show off yourself, and you are not doing your duty with all your heart and effort to satisfy God, nor doing things according to the truth principles, then your manifestations and revelations, your behavior, are detestable to God. Why does God detest them? God says you are not focusing on proper tasks, you haven't put all your heart, effort, or mind into the performance of your duty, and you're not following the right path. The caliber, gifts, and talents God has given you are already sufficient. It's you who are not satisfied, not loyal to your duty, never knowing your place, always wanting to spout high-sounding ideas and show off, ultimately making a mess of your duties. The caliber, gifts, and talents given to you by God have not been utilized to their full potential, no full effort has been made, and no results have been achieved. Although you may be quite busy, God says you are like a prancing clown, not a person who is content and focused on their proper tasks. God does not like such people"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). After reading God's words, I understood that in always wanting to change my caliber, I was being

controlled by an arrogant disposition. My disposition was very arrogant, and I was always unwilling to lag behind others. I wanted to win the esteem and approval of others and stand out from the crowd. I believed that this would give my life value, so I wanted to use the improvement of my caliber to achieve this goal. Growing up, I was always a top student in school. If someone scored higher than me on a test, I wouldn't admit defeat, and I would be determined to regain my advantage next time. My mother often said that I was too competitive. Because my grades were good at school, I gained the praise of my parents and teachers, and the teachers even required my classmates to learn from me. I very much enjoyed such a distinction and thought that a person ought to stand out from their competition. Now, I was doing my duty with the same pursuit, always wanting to be a leader or a supervisor. I thought that these people were pillars of the church and that everyone admired and approved of them, and that those of poor caliber could only do ordinary duties, working behind the scenes and living as good-for-nothings. Therefore, when I saw that the sister whom I was partnered with before had gone on to be a church leader, while I was only an ordinary waterer, I couldn't accept it. I didn't want to be this mediocre forever. I refused to acknowledge it or admit failure, and I was unwilling to do my duty with my feet on the ground. I always wanted to improve my caliber and do leadership or supervising duties. Even though God's words had clearly stated that God's work does not change people's caliber, I still refused to acknowledge this. I always wanted to keep trying and give it all I had, to improve my caliber through my hard work and the price I paid. I was truly so rebellious, so arrogant! God says: **"The caliber, gifts, and talents God has given you are already sufficient. It's you who are not satisfied, not loyal to your duty, never knowing your place, always wanting to spout high-sounding ideas and show off, ultimately making**

a mess of your duties.” I had poor working capability and my caliber wasn’t too good; I wasn’t leadership material. However, I had my own areas that I was skilled in. For instance, I could speak a foreign language and enjoyed pondering God’s words. When I fellowshipped about my knowledge of the truth, my thinking was also relatively clear. In fact, the watering duty that I was doing now was a perfect fit for me. However, I couldn’t stick to my position, always wanting to improve my standing and do supervising duties. It turned out that none of my efforts to improve changed my caliber, and on the contrary, they made my state quite terrible, and I couldn’t even do my own job well. Recognizing this, I felt guilty and indebted.

Later on, I once again thought, “Why do I always think being of poor caliber is a bad thing? Why do I let this affect the performance of my duty?” When I read God’s words that were relevant to this aspect, my state was reversed. Almighty God says: **“Because your caliber and abilities are limited, the effects of doing your duties are always mediocre, always failing to reach the level or standard you idealize. So, unconsciously, you continuously realize that you are not any sort of standout, any superior or extraordinary person. Gradually, you come to understand that your caliber is not as good as you imagined, but rather all too ordinary. In the long run, this process is very helpful for you to know yourself—you experience some failures and setbacks in a practical way, and after reflecting internally, you become more accurate in assessing your level, abilities, and caliber. You increasingly recognize that you are not a person of high caliber, that although you may have some strengths and gifts, a bit of judgment, or occasionally have some ideas or plans, you still fall short of the truth principles, far from God’s requirements and the standards of the truth, and even farther from the**

standards of possessing the truth reality—unconsciously, you have these judgments and assessments about yourself. In the process of judging and assessing yourself, your knowledge of yourself will become increasingly accurate, and your corrupt dispositions and revelations of corruption will gradually decrease, becoming more restrained and controlled. Of course, controlling corrupt dispositions is not the goal. What is the goal? The goal is to gradually learn to seek the truth in the process of control, and to conduct yourself in a well-behaved manner, not always trying to spout high-sounding ideas or show off, not always striving competitively to be the best or the strongest, and not always trying to prove yourself. While this awareness continuously engraves itself deep within your heart, you will ponder, ‘I must seek what the truth principles for doing this are, and what God says about it.’ This awareness will gradually be established deep within your heart, and your degree of seeking, recognizing, and accepting God’s word and the truth will increasingly heighten, which for you signifies the hope of being saved. The more you can accept the truth, the less your corrupt dispositions will reveal themselves; an even better result is that you will have more opportunities to use God’s word as a standard for practice. Isn’t this gradually embarking on the path to salvation? Is this not a good thing? (Yes.) But if all your abilities are superior, perfect, and extraordinary among people, can you still seek the truth while handling matters and doing your duties? That’s hard to say. For someone with extraordinary capabilities in all areas to approach God with a quieted heart or humble attitude to understand themselves, recognize their shortcomings and know their corrupt dispositions, and reach the point of seeking the truth, accepting the truth, and then practicing the truth—this is quite difficult to do, isn’t it? (Yes.)” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of

the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (7)). **“Most of those whom God saves are not those who hold high positions in the world or in society. Because their caliber and abilities are average or even poor, they struggle to find popularity or success in the world, often feeling that life is bleak and unfair. This leads to a need for faith, and ultimately, they come before God and enter into God’s house. This is a basic condition God gives people in choosing them. Only with this need can one have the desire to accept God’s salvation. If your conditions in all aspects are good and suitable for striving in the world, and you are always wanting to make a name for yourself, then you would not have the desire to accept God’s salvation, nor would you even have the opportunity to receive God’s salvation. Even though you may have average or even poor caliber, you are still much more blessed than nonbelievers in having the opportunity to be saved by God. Therefore, having a poor caliber is not your shortcoming, nor is it an obstacle to casting off corrupt dispositions and achieving salvation. In the final analysis, it is God who gave you this caliber. You have as much as God gives you. If God gives you good caliber, then you have good caliber. If God gives you average caliber, then your caliber is average. If God gives you poor caliber, then your caliber is poor. Once you understand this, you must accept it from God and be able to submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements. Which truth forms the basis for submitting? It is that such arrangements by God contain God’s good will; God has painstaking intentions, and people must not complain or misunderstand God’s heart. God will not hold you in high esteem because of your good caliber, nor will He disdain or detest you for your poor caliber. What is it that God detests? What God detests is people not loving or accepting the truth, people understanding the truth but not practicing it, people**

not doing what they are capable of doing, people not being able to give their all in their duties yet always having extravagant desires, always wanting status, vying for position, and always wanting things from Him. This is what God finds disgusting and detestable” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (7)). After reading God’s words, I was quite touched. I understood that my poor caliber was ordained by God and had God’s goodwill in it; it was a good thing. In fact, my disposition had always been very arrogant. In the past, because I had this disposition and didn’t do my duty according to the principles, I brought losses to my work and committed a transgression. If I was of good caliber and had strong work capability, my disposition would be even more arrogant, and it would be even harder to listen to the brothers and sisters’ opinions. I would be unable to humble myself and seek the truth principles. This way, it would become easy to do evil and disrupt and disturb the church’s work. Precisely because my caliber was somewhat poor and I could not manage a heavy workload, I was able to be steadier and more prudent in my duty than before. Sometimes, when my opinion differed a little from that of others, I was not so stubborn. This was an unconscious form of self-protection which reduced my chance of doing evil. I thought of a sister I met before whom everyone said was of good caliber, which made me envy her. Later on, she was selected as a leader, and the scope of the work she oversaw got increasingly wider. However, she didn’t pursue the truth or pay attention to eating and drinking God’s words, nor did she seek the truth to resolve her corrupt disposition. Ultimately, when faced with trials, she betrayed God and abandoned her duty. This showed me that no matter how good someone’s caliber and working capability are, what’s most crucial is whether they can pursue the truth and resolve their corrupt disposition. Whether a person can be saved or not doesn’t depend entirely on the level

of their caliber. Being of good caliber isn't necessarily a good thing, just as being of poor caliber isn't necessarily a bad thing. What's most important is whether someone can submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements and correctly regard their caliber, pursue the truth with their feet on the ground, and do their duty well as a created being. This is the most critical thing.

I then read a passage of God's words and found a path to practice. Almighty God says: **"Do not try by all means to change your caliber or improve your abilities in all aspects, but rather accurately recognize and correctly approach your inherent caliber and abilities. If you discover where you are lacking, quickly study those areas in which you can achieve progress in a short time so as to make up for these shortcomings. For those areas you cannot reach, do not force it. Tailor your actions to fit your own caliber and abilities. The ultimate principle is to do your duty according to God's word, God's requirements for humans, and the truth principles. No matter the level of your caliber, you can achieve varying degrees of acting and doing your duties according to the truth principles; you can meet or live up to God's standards. These truth principles are absolutely not empty talk; they absolutely do not transcend humanity. They are all paths of practice tailor-made for created humankind's corrupt dispositions, innate qualities, and various abilities and caliber. Therefore, no matter what your caliber is, no matter where your abilities are insufficient or flawed, it is not a problem; if you truly understand the truth and are willing to practice the truth, there will be a path forward. A person's deficiencies in certain aspects of caliber and abilities absolutely do not hinder their practice of the truth. If your judgment or some other ability is lacking, you can seek more and fellowship more, as well as seek guidance and advice from those who understand the truth. When**

you understand and grasp the principles and paths of practice, you should put them into practice with all your effort based on your stature. Accepting and practicing—this is what you ought to do” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (7)). From God’s words, I understood that one should not do all they can to change their caliber, but rather, to the extent that they can reach with their given caliber, put their heart, energy, and mind into doing their duty. They should diligently study and do in-depth research on the professional knowledge they should learn, and tap into the full potential of their given caliber. As for one’s caliber and working capability, they can improve these a bit if possible, but if they’re not up to the task, there’s no need to push it. Understanding this, my heart became clearer.

From then on, I thought about how to put my heart and energy into doing my duty within the boundaries of my given caliber. I realized that I wasn’t good at cultivating newcomers to do their duties, and so I tried to seek and ponder the principles around this. I also listened earnestly to what the brothers and sisters shared and talked about. Sometimes, when I ran into some problems and didn’t know how to resolve them, I didn’t try to evade them or blame God for giving me a poor caliber. Instead, I prayed to and relied on God, while also seeking from and fellowshiping with brothers and sisters. Throughout this practicing process, I unconsciously came up with plans for resolving some matters. Now, my caliber is the same as it was before. It hasn’t changed. However, I understand how to correctly regard myself, and my heart has been set free and liberated.

32. I Dare to Fight Against the Evil Forces of Antichrists

By Wang Ju, China

After believing in God for more than one year, I served as a group leader in the church. Ye Ping was our church's leader. I saw that she was of high caliber, did her duty enthusiastically, and arranged work in an orderly and clear fashion. Whenever someone had a problem, she could always quickly find suitable words of God to fellowship with them and offer help. Everyone admired her and thought that she understood the truth. During gatherings, Ye Ping would often say, "The church is very busy with work now, and I must concern myself with the work of both preaching the gospel and watering. Most of the people in the church are new believers who don't understand the truth, and so I have to pay attention to their life entry." Brothers and sisters all thought that she had a burden, and when they encountered difficulties, they would wait for Ye Ping to fellowship. I also admired her and thought that she was a good leader of our church. At that time, everyone in the church thought highly of Ye Ping and would often say that she knew how to fellowship and was a capable worker. When Ye Ping heard this, she would reveal a pleased expression and say proudly, "I have sufficiently attended to all items of work within the church, and I remember the circumstances of each brother and sister." I thought that it was arrogant of her to say such a thing. But I thought that since people of high caliber and those who had gifts were all relatively arrogant, it was enough for her to just do the church's work well, and so I didn't take the matter seriously.

After that, I discovered that Ye Ping was in charge of the gospel work but had never fellowshiped on the principles of preaching the gospel or on God's intention. She did not resolve real problems, and only ordered people

about and did superficial work. One time, Ye Ping arranged for me to go preach the gospel to a potential gospel recipient. While we were talking, the gospel recipient frequently physically harassed me. I saw that this person's nature was very wicked, and he was not sincerely investigating the true way at all. I reported it to Ye Ping right away. To my surprise, she grumpily lectured me, "You only went a few times and are already giving up? What lessons have you learned?" She finished speaking and left. Back then, I was confused as to why she'd suddenly rebuked me, and I felt wronged, "I was harassed by someone, and you didn't comfort me or resolve the problem, but instead reprimanded me. Where are your compassion and your sense of responsibility in that?" Later, I kept on seeking, and confirmed that this person's nature was wicked, that he did not love the truth, and that he was not a worthy gospel recipient, and so I gave up on him. But after this, Ye Ping would always find fault with me for no reason. For example, she would deliberately ask me some questions, and when I couldn't answer she would call me muddled-headed. She also made me go give aid to someone who was not pursuing the truth in the slightest. When I couldn't help them, she took the opportunity to lecture me. I didn't dare to report this problem to the superior leaders, because I thought that, after all, she was a leader, and many brothers and sisters thought highly of her. Meanwhile, I was only a group leader, and I should do my best not to offend her. But what I didn't expect was that Ye Ping unreasonably stopped my duty as a group leader and arranged for me to gather together with two people who were not pursuing the truth at all. During the gatherings, one always dozed off, and the other always pestered me to talk about gossip. After two months, there had been no gains from these gatherings, and I was in a state of confusion. I thought of when I gathered before, of how everyone would open their hearts and fellowship on their experiential knowledge, which I enjoyed very

much. But now, I was in great pain, and I was also very negative and weak. I thought that attending gatherings here, the loss incurred on my life was too great. If I continued like this, could I gain the truth and attain salvation? I only found out afterward that Ye Ping was in fact isolating me by making me gather together with two people who were about to be cleared out. After I learned the truth, I was upset and furious. I really didn't think that she was this insidious and malicious. Tormenting me like this because I didn't listen to her, was this not the sort of thing that evil people did? At the time, I really wanted to report Ye Ping's situation to the leaders and workers, and to fellowship with my brothers and sisters and discern her. But, since Ye Ping had always been a leader in the church and many brothers and sisters thought highly of her, if I fellowshipped with my brothers and sisters and discerned her, would they all believe me? If Ye Ping heard about it, she would certainly continue to take revenge and torment me. If she leveled an accusation against me and cleared me out, then would my path of believing in God not have reached its end? Thinking of this, I swallowed my grievances. Not long after, due to safety concerns, Ye Ping was unable to be in charge of the church's work, and a sister was temporarily arranged to take charge. When this sister gathered with us, she saw that there was some enlightenment and light in my fellowship on God's words and that I was willing to do my duty, so after understanding my situation, she let me resume my duty.

After that, I heard that another two sisters were also continuously being isolated for reasons still unknown. After learning the details, I found out that these two sisters were isolated by Ye Ping for coming to the defense of a brother. Because the brother had delayed the gospel work, Ye Ping pruned him incessantly. The two sisters reminded her, "He already knows he was wrong. You shouldn't just prune him; you should also fellowship on

the truth to resolve the problem.” After hearing this, Ye Ping was very irritated, and she isolated them immediately. If brothers and sisters were disobedient to her or provoked her, she would seize hold of their transgressions and shortcomings to torment them. This was an evil deed! During a gathering, I fellowshiped and discerned her, and a sister interrupted me and said, “Are you asking us to discern Ye Ping because you want to get revenge on her for isolating you earlier? If that’s the case, you really need to reflect on yourself.” When I heard this, it occurred to me that most brothers and sisters were misled by Ye Ping and thought highly of her. I was only a group leader, so how could they believe what I said and discern someone who had been a leader for many years? At this time, I suddenly felt deflated. I thought to myself, “My understanding of the truth is shallow, and I cannot thoroughly dissect Ye Ping’s problem all at once. If I continue speaking, they might misunderstand and think that I’m getting revenge for the sake of my personal interests. If Ye Ping found out about this, she might declare me guilty of taking revenge on a leader and expel me. Then wouldn’t even my chance to believe in God be lost? Forget it. I’d better make concessions to stay out of trouble and avoid bringing disaster upon myself.” Later, the church chose new leaders and workers, and I was chosen as a watering deacon. Xin Ya and Li Ru were selected as church leaders, and Ye Ping was put in charge of text-based work. Ye Ping harbored resentment in her heart because she wasn’t chosen to be a leader. After a while, she secretly drew in her sister and Wang Jing and distorted right and wrong and disseminated rumors in front of the brothers and sisters. She said that the leaders who were chosen this time were appointed in advance, thus misleading the brothers and sisters and getting them to support her in overturning the election results. Luckily, the leaders had fellowshiped with everyone about the election principles beforehand, so the brothers and

sisters knew the ins and outs of this matter and were not tricked. Hearing about this matter, I was angry and worried, and I said to the leaders, “It was one thing for Ye Ping to torment people before, and now she is misleading and drawing in brothers and sisters and disturbing the church’s work. The nature of this is too bad! It must be reported to the upper-level leaders right away!” The leaders were of the same opinion as me and reported the situation to the upper-level leader, Liu Ruo. Liu Ruo exposed the evil deeds of Ye Ping, her sister and Wang Jing, but after Liu Ruo left, Ye Ping didn’t hold back in the slightest and continued to spread her words in the church, “The leaders and workers cannot do actual work and do not have the work of the Holy Spirit; they are all false leaders. False leaders cannot do church work, and do not know how to fellowship on the truth to solve problems. All they can do is harm people.” Ye Ping and the others also spoke to those who were isolated, “You were loyally doing your duty, and it was those false leaders who suppressed you and isolated you.” They also said to a sister who did hosting duty, “It is useless for you to loyally do your duty. So-and-so was doing hosting duties just like you, and now they have already been isolated. The same will happen to you.” After some undiscerning people were stirred up and misled by Ye Ping and her cohorts, they developed preconceived ideas about the leaders and did not fellowship on God’s words during gatherings, always making judgments about the leaders’ faults and attacking and judging the leaders to be incapable of doing actual work. They also held Ye Ping in high regard, saying that she knew how to fellowship, knew how to do church work, and was leader material. They also misled some brothers and sisters, getting them to report the current leaders. Ye Ping made an absolute mess of the church life and threw it into chaos, and the work could not progress. Seeing the church turn into this, there was a feeling in my heart that I couldn’t explain. In order to

contend for the leadership position, Ye Ping did so much evil. She was a sheer devil and was setting herself against God!

After that, I reported Ye Ping's situation to the preacher. The preacher quickly went to fellowship with Ye Ping and the others. She had only fellowshipped a few words when Ye Ping and her cohorts attacked her, saying that she was taking the side of the false leaders and was not safeguarding the church's work. This verbal assault made the preacher cry, and after that, in order to quell the chaos as soon as possible, she dismissed the two church leaders and one gospel deacon for no reason. Seeing such an arrangement, my heart was overwhelmed, and I thought, "Are things not being turned upside down? She did not handle the person who did evil, but rather dismissed those who were capable of doing some actual work. How unprincipled this was! Was she not following Ye Ping in doing evil?" I asked the preacher, "According to which of their behaviors and which of the principles was your decision to dismiss these people based?" She said that these leaders and the gospel deacon could not resolve the brothers and sisters' problems, did not talk about their own corruption in gatherings and that they lacked the work of the Holy Spirit, and then she put me in temporary charge of the church's work. Hearing how the reasons given by the preacher and the attacks against leaders by Ye Ping and her cohorts were so similar, I was very angry. On my way home, I just could not accept it. Now, even the preacher was taking Ye Ping's side. All the church's leaders had been dismissed, and I was only a watering deacon. I lacked the principles for discernment, and I could not fellowship clearly on the truth. If I did not do my work well, would Ye Ping not use this as leverage to condemn and report me? Moreover, Ye Ping and the others were all slick talkers, and the brothers and sisters had already been misled by them, so who would take my side? With these thoughts, I lost all my courage and felt

very weak in my heart. As I thought I had to be responsible for the church's work, I was somewhat timid. Ye Ping was after the leadership position, and if I was to be in charge of the church's work, she would certainly think that I was occupying her position and target me. With such malicious humanity, would she let me off the hook? Would she use even more malicious means to torment me? The more I thought, the more worried and uneasy I was, and I planned to have Sister Li Ru handle the church's work on my behalf. This way, Ye Ping and her cohorts would not direct their attack at me. After that, when we carried out work in small groups, I had Li Ru go to the group that Ye Ping was in. As a result, Li Ru was attacked by them. The work could not be carried out, and Li Ru's state was also affected. I blamed myself and hated how selfish I had been. But, if I truly had to take up the matter myself, I would not have had the faith to do so. I prayed to God, "God, there are evil people disturbing the church, and I ought to stand up and safeguard the church's work, but I am afraid that Ye Ping and her cohorts will use this as leverage to suppress and torment me, resulting in me losing my duty. I am hiding in the background like a coward, and I have not fulfilled my responsibility. God, I beg You to give me courage and faith." After praying, I saw a passage of God's words that made me feel very humiliated. God's words say: **"If people cannot express what they ought to express during service or achieve what is inherently possible for them, and instead go through the motions, they have lost the function that a created being should have. Such people are what are known as 'mediocrities'; they are useless refuse. How can such people properly be called created beings?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). God said that those who cannot do everything they are capable of are **"mediocrities"** and **"refuse."** I was such a person. I saw that Ye Ping was particularly

concerned with her reputation and status and attacked and took revenge on those who disobeyed her, using dirty tricks to torment them. In order to contend for the leadership position, she even plotted a scheme to mislead people and get them to overturn the election results with her. With her cohorts, she sowed discord among the brothers and sisters and the leaders. I undoubtedly saw her malicious behavior very clearly, but when I fellowshiped and discerned Ye Ping and the brothers and sisters suspected that I was taking revenge on her, I feared that if I continued discerning her, more people would eventually stand up to oppose me. In order to protect myself and avoid being harmed and attacked by Ye Ping and her cohorts, I even lost that little bit of courage to discern her that I had. When I was made to do the church's work after the two leaders and the deacon were dismissed, what I thought of first were the scenes of Ye Ping and her cohorts attacking the leaders, and I feared that if I was in charge of the church's work, Ye Ping would believe that I was occupying her position and use that as leverage to get revenge on me. I was constantly wanting to evade this responsibility and didn't dare to take charge of the church's work. I knew all too well that Ye Ping and her cohorts were exceedingly vicious. Li Ru had also been attacked by them many times. I only wanted to protect myself, so when I was assigning work, I deliberately had Li Ru go to confront them. I used Li Ru as a shield. How could I be so selfish and despicable? Facing the evil forces of antichrists that were disturbing the church, I did not adhere to the principles and could not stand on the side of justice. How could I be considered a created being? I was truly useless; I had greatly disappointed God! The more I tried to ponder God's words, the more I reproached myself and felt remorse. I could not wound God's heart any longer, and I could not be so selfish and cowardly anymore, only considering myself. I had to submit to the circumstances that God had

arranged, and try my best to do the church's work first and foremost. After that, I had the courage to face Ye Ping and her cohorts. Even though I would still be attacked by Ye Ping and the others when I went to carry out work, no matter how unreasonable they were, I would no longer evade them. I would only pay mind to fellowshiping the truth principles and not be influenced by them.

After that, I reflected on myself, thinking, "Why am I so afraid of them and why do I not dare to face them?" In the midst of this seeking, I saw two passages of God's words that moved me very much. Almighty God says: **"When justice clashes with wickedness, man's anger will not flare up in the defense of the existence of justice or to uphold it; on the contrary, when the forces of justice are threatened, persecuted and attacked, man's attitude is one of overlooking, evading or flinching away. However, when facing the forces of wickedness, man's attitude is one of accommodating, of bowing and scraping"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). **"God has said: 'Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God.' To what extent are you able to believe in these words? Fighting against antichrists and evil people reveals the size of your faith. If you have a genuine belief in God, then you have true faith. If you only have a little belief in God, and that belief is vague and hollow, then you don't have true faith. If you don't believe that God can be sovereign over all this and that Satan is under God's dominion, and you still fear antichrists and evil people, can tolerate them committing evil in the church, their disturbing and ruining the work of the church, and can make compromises with Satan or beg for its mercy in order to protect**

yourself, not daring to stand up and fight them, and you have become a deserter, a people pleaser, and a bystander, then you lack a genuine belief in God. Your belief in God becomes a question mark, which makes your belief terribly pitiful!” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). It was as if God’s words were judging me face-to-face, which made me deeply distressed and afraid. I saw that God truly did scrutinize the depths of the human heart, and that He saw clearly what was in my heart. Mulling it over carefully, I realized that no matter how strong Satan’s evil forces were, they could not surpass the limits that God had designated for them, and that they absolutely couldn’t and didn’t dare to do the things that God didn’t permit. The root cause of my fear of Ye Ping and her companions was that I did not believe in God’s sovereignty over everything. I thought that I didn’t have status in the church and that my words had no stature. Meanwhile, Ye Ping had always been a leader and a smooth talker who had also misled some brothers and sisters. She even got the preacher to turn to her side. I was weak and vulnerable, and my words carried little weight; I was no match for her. So even when I was isolated and tormented by her, and even when I saw her suppressing brothers and sisters while also doing evil and disturbing the church’s work, I still wasn’t brave enough to report her. I thought I would be dismissed and cleared out, thus losing my chance to attain salvation. I would rather lead a meaningless existence, not interfering as she continued to do evil and not exposing her evil deeds. I was simply complicit in her evil and giving my tacit consent to Satan damaging the church’s work. Thinking over my various experiences while believing in God, I saw that God was guiding and ruling over me every step of the way. I was met with Ye Ping’s suppression and torment, and I thought I would be isolated forever, but then, due to safety concerns, Ye Ping was not able to do the church’s work, and the new sister in charge

of the work resumed my duty after understanding the situation. Everything that I experienced first-hand was ruled over by God; did He not also have the final say in my prospects and fate? I experienced all these environments that God arranged, and was supplied with so many truths, but why had I not had any faith in God up until now? When things befell me, I didn't pray and call out to God or practice the truth. Instead, I was afraid of Satan's status and power. I saw these evil forces of Satan as loftier than even God Himself. Was I not surrendering to Satan? What place had I left for God in my heart? I saw that I believed in theory that God holds sovereignty over everything and that He is righteous, but when something befell me, I compromised with Satan and became a deserter. I had such little faith in God! At that time, I finally understood that even though the evil forces of antichrists might run rampant for a while, suppressing brothers and sisters and misleading some muddled, undiscerning people, God used them in His service to help people learn to be discerning. Sooner or later, antichrists would be shown for what they were and eliminated. It was just like before, when our church had an antichrist who did many various evils while doing her duty. In the end, all of her evil deeds were revealed, and she was forsaken by the brothers and sisters and expelled from the church. I saw that the church is where God's righteousness reigns. If one does not diligently experience it for themselves, how could they come to know God's deeds? I only saw what's on the surface, and when something befell me, I yielded to Satan's forces; I had no place for God in my heart. I was an utter disbeliever! I didn't understand the truth; I was a pitiful creature! Thinking of this, I became ashamed of how cowardly and selfish I was. I was willing to practice according to the principles of God's house and depend on God to expose and forsake the antichrists. I hurried to meet my fellow workers and discuss how we should deal with Ye Ping and her cohorts.

After we met, we ate and drank a passage of God's words. God says: **"If a church contains no one who is willing to practice the truth and no one who can stand firm in their testimony to God, then that church should be completely isolated, and its connections with other churches must be severed. This is called 'burying death'; this is what it means to spurn Satan. If a church contains several local bullies, and they are followed by 'little flies' that entirely lack discernment, and if people in such a church, even after having seen the truth, are still incapable of rejecting the binds and manipulation of these bullies, then all those fools will be eliminated in the end. These little flies might not have done anything terrible, but they are even more deceitful, even more slick and evasive, and everyone like this will be eliminated. Not a single one shall remain!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). After reading God's words, I felt that He was unleashing His anger on me. **"Burying death"** and **"Not a single one shall remain,"** these words pierced the depths of my heart like a sword. I felt that God's disposition is righteous and does not tolerate offense, and I trembled in fear. Ye Ping and the other antichrists and evil people disturbed the church for almost a year for the sake of vying for power and status and did so much evil. I clearly was somewhat discerning toward them and had already seen the nature essence of these evil people, but I delayed exposing and reporting them, allowing them to do evil; I had already offended God's disposition. When I saw God say that slick and sly people must all be eliminated in the end, I thought of how before, in order to safeguard my own interests, I had seen Ye Ping's evil deeds yet not exposed or reported her, causing a loss in the life entry of my brothers and sisters. I felt a deep sense of self-reproach. In the midst of my reflection, I recognized that, being controlled by the satanic poison known as "The bird that sticks its neck out is the one that

gets shot,” I had done things in a very sly and deceitful manner. After Ye Ping tormented me, there were several times when I wanted to report the fact of her evil deeds, but as soon as I thought that Ye Ping might suppress and torment me again, jeopardizing my prospects and my destination, I recoiled out of fear. After taking over the church’s work, I simply sent Li Ru to act as a shield while I hid in the background, not offending anybody. I saw that I was living according to satanic poisons and that I had become selfish and despicable. When I encountered a crisis, I just hid inside my shell like a snail. I didn’t have a shred of bravery to face it, let alone any sense of justice! In fact, the more concessions I made to avoid trouble, the more I was allowing the antichrists and evil people to disrupt the church, and the more I was handing the brothers and sisters over to the cruelty of Satan and devils. Now, I was in charge of the church’s work, and God’s intention was for me to abide by the principles, to protect the brothers and sisters, and to not let the antichrists harm the work of the church. I needed to fulfill my obligation and responsibility. Before, I was protecting myself in all respects, and I wasn’t able to practice the truth and satisfy God, but God didn’t prohibit me from doing my duty; instead, He used His words to judge and warn me. This is God’s greatest love! This time, I had to report Ye Ping and fight against the evil forces of antichrists until the end. I had to be a true person for once! After that, we reported the fact of Ye Ping and her cohorts’ evil deeds, as well as the preacher’s manifestation of following them in doing evil to the upper-level leaders. After the leaders had an understanding of Ye Ping’s manifestations, they had us first fellowship with the brothers and sisters and discern her, and provide more facts about Ye Ping and her cohorts’ evil deeds as quickly as possible. Through fellowshipping for a period of time, the brothers and sisters began to discern Ye Ping, and they were all willing to provide evidence of the evil deeds of

Ye Ping and her cohorts. Later, after the leaders verified their manifestations we put forward, they saw that the evidence was conclusive, and Ye Ping and the others were cleared out of the church.

Later on, we read yet another passage of God's words and fellowshiped on why God in the last days permitted antichrists and evil people to do evil and cause disturbances in the church, what God's intention was here, and what lessons we should learn. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists and evil people appear in some churches and create disturbances, and in doing so they mislead some people—is this a good thing or a bad thing? Is this God's love, or is it God playing with people and revealing them? You can't understand this, can you? God brings all things into His service to perfect and save those He wishes to save, and what those who genuinely seek the truth and practice the truth ultimately gain is the truth. Some who don't seek the truth, however, complain, saying, 'It isn't right for God to work this way. It causes me to suffer so much! I almost fell in with antichrists. If this really is arranged by God, how can He allow people to fall in with antichrists?' What's going on here? You not following antichrists proves that you have God's protection; if you fall in with antichrists, then that is a betrayal of God and God no longer wants you. So, is it a good thing or a bad thing that these antichrists and evil people cause disturbances in the church? From the outside, it appears to be a bad thing, but when these antichrists and evil people are revealed, you then grow in discernment, they are cleansed away, and you grow in stature. When you encounter such people again in the future, you will have discernment of them even before they've shown their true colors, and you will reject them. This will allow you to learn lessons and be benefited; you will know how to discern antichrists and will no longer**

be misled by Satan. So, tell Me, is it not a good thing to have antichrists disturbing and misleading people? Only when they have experienced to this stage can people see that God has not acted in line with their notions and imaginings, and that God permits the great red dragon to frenziedly create disturbances and permits antichrists to mislead God's chosen people so that He can use Satan in His service in order to perfect His chosen people, and only then do people understand God's painstaking intentions. Some people say, 'I've been misled by antichrists twice and I still can't discern them. If a yet more cunning antichrist comes along, I'll just be misled again.' Then let it happen again so that you can experience it and learn the lesson—God must do things this way so that He can save mankind from Satan's influence"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Resolving One's Notions Can One Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God (1)). God's words made me feel that He was truly too almighty and wise in His work! Evil people and antichrists disturbing the church was not a good thing on the surface, and was not in line with man's notions and imaginings, but it happened with God's permission and there was God's wisdom in it. God used Satan's and devils' performances in the church to reveal and eliminate them, and also to help us learn to be discerning. God knew that our statures were too small and that it was easy for us to be misled by antichrists and evil people, so through them doing evil in the church, He made us grow more discerning. At the same time, He also revealed those who were muddled and undiscerning and blindly followed others. I thought of God's words: **"Many are called, but few are chosen"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). I saw more clearly in my heart that there are many people who believe in and follow God, and at the beginning, the wheat and the weeds are all bundled up together, and one cannot see which is good and which is bad. However, as

God's judgment work in the last days progresses, those who can accept and pursue the truth are able to accept God's judgment and rid themselves of corruption. Meanwhile, disbelievers, evil people, and antichrists are shown for what they are and thoroughly cleared out, and the church becomes cleaner and cleaner. This is the inevitable outcome of the successful completion of God's judgment work!

On December 4, 2018, the notice of Ye Ping and the others' expulsion was passed down to the church. The brothers and sisters all rejoiced and praised God's righteousness from the bottom of their hearts. The chaos in the church finally subsided, and the brothers and sisters returned to their normal church lives. From the depths of my heart, I thanked God for His guidance!

33. I No Longer Vie for Leadership

By Fengxian, China

In 2016, I was responsible for text-based work in the church. At that time, the results of a particular task were consistently poor, so the leader asked me to directly follow up on it. By relying on God and putting in actual effort in studying the principles, I soon saw an improvement in the work. Later, another task encountered problems, and the leader again asked me to take charge and resolve them. Hearing this, I was very pleased. Seeing that the leader entrusted all the difficult tasks to me, I felt I was a rare person of talent and a pillar of our church.

Later, our church was going to elect a leader, and I thought, “Will I be elected as a leader this time? Currently, I am doing the text-based duty, which doesn’t allow me to stand out or have any status. If I could be elected as a leader, it would be different. I would have the power to call the shots and make decisions, and the brothers and sisters would come to me with their problems and difficulties. Wouldn’t that be glorious! When I was in school, I wanted to be the class monitor, but that wish never came true. If I could be elected as a leader in the church, it would prove my abilities and fulfill my dream.” After that, I was particularly diligent in my duty, and I actively fellowshiped to solve any state the brothers and sisters had. When I received their approval, I was very happy, hoping they would vote for me during the election. But in the end, I was not elected. I felt very disappointed. Later, I heard the brothers and sisters say that I wasn’t elected because they felt I was immature and lacked depth in my life entry. So I quickly pondered how to make myself appear more mature and steady. In terms of life entry, I read more of God’s words that judge and expose people’s nature essence, hoping to learn and equip myself more, while

paying attention to practicing the truth in daily life, so that everyone could see my progress and changes and would vote for me in the next election.

However, later, I still failed to be elected several times. In particular, one election resulted in Sister Siyu being elected as a leader. On hearing this I was very surprised, and thought, “Her caliber and work capabilities are average. How come most of the brothers and sisters voted for her? In what way is she better than me?” I felt jealous and defiant, and blurted out, “Is she capable?” Out of curiosity, the sisters all asked me, “Do you know her well?” Without thinking, I said, “I have worked with her before. I think her caliber and work capabilities are average, and I haven’t seen her write any good experiential testimony articles. I even doubt if she has any life entry.” After hearing this, the sisters all said, “If you know her well and think she’s not suitable, you should speak up. Church leadership is especially important; we must choose the right people.” The brothers and sisters all started discussing it. The next day, the sister whom I was partnered with sternly pruned me, saying, “What you said yesterday amounted to passing judgment on leaders and workers. Although Siyu’s life entry is shallow, she has good caliber, a right heart, and strives for the truth, and she carries a burden for the work. You didn’t measure her based on principles or take her current performance into consideration, but instead latched onto her past deficiencies. You speaking with ulterior motives like that has caused the brothers and sisters to be biased against Siyu, as if the church had chosen the wrong person. The nature of this is quite serious and amounts to throwing the election into disorder. You should reflect on this properly and come to understand it!” At the sister’s words, I felt my face burning up. Thinking that the nature of passing judgment on leaders and workers was causing a disturbance and undermining them, and was an evil

deed, I was somewhat fearful. I dared not judge verbally anymore, but still refused to submit in my heart.

One time during a gathering, when a leader was fellowshiping, I noticed that everyone's attention was on the leader. At that moment, I felt that the leader seemed to radiate light, and I fantasized about how great it would be if I were a leader. I looked out the window, my nose tingled and I almost shed a tear, thinking, "Ever since I came to believe in God, I've never been a leader. Why haven't I had the opportunity? I've been doing so well, but I still can't be a leader. God is unfair to me! What's the point of me continuing to pursue in this way?" During that period, I felt very dark and dejected, and was unwilling to draw near to God or tell Him what was in my heart. Seeing the brothers and sisters in poor states, I didn't want to fellowship and help them anymore. I still looked down on Siyu, feeling that her intelligence, caliber, and work capabilities were inferior to mine. "Why can't I be elected as a leader?" I wondered. Without realizing it, I vented my dissatisfaction in front of my family. Seeing that I didn't know myself at all, they pruned me, saying, "You're pursuing status, and the more you chase after it, the more it will elude you!" I said defiantly, "On what basis?" After saying that, I felt scared: Wasn't I openly clamoring against God? I didn't dare to say anything more.

During one gathering, I openly exposed my state of having ambition and a desire to always want to be a leader. A sister fellowshiped her experience to help me, and she said, "We often think we are better than others, and wonder why they can be leaders while we cannot, feeling defiant and dissatisfied and even passing judgment on them behind their backs. The nature of this is opposing God and clamoring against Him." Hearing the sister's fellowship, I reflected on myself. I hadn't been elected as a leader in all this time, and remained defiant in my heart, arguing with

God, “On what basis do You not let me be a leader?” This “On what basis” was me refusing to submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements, and opposing and clamoring against God. As a corrupted person, I deserved whatever treatment I received from God. Moreover, the leaders were elected by the brothers and sisters; not only did I not reflect on myself for my constant failure to be elected, but also opposed and argued with God. I was truly without reason! The leader also pointed out my problem, “You do your duty for the sake of pursuing status, becoming negative and resistant when you don’t get it. You are walking the path of an antichrist, so no one dares to elect you as a leader.” Every word the leader said pierced my heart. I felt very distressed and contrite. I prayed to God, “God, I am very afraid now. My pursuit of status disgusts You. Please have mercy on me. Let me know my corrupt disposition so I no longer argue with and oppose You.” Back home, I looked for words of God that expose the pursuit of status. I read these words of God: **“Those who have misunderstandings or imaginings about God, or who have extravagant desires or demands of Him, are highly adulterated when performing their duties. They want prestige, status, and rewards, and if some big reward is still far away, and out of sight, they’ll ponder, ‘Since I can’t get it immediately, I’ll just have to wait and endure. But I should first get a little bit of benefits now, or at the very least some status. I’ll first strive to be a leader in the church, to be responsible for dozens of people. It’s quite glamorous to always have people circling around you.’ And so this adulteration in their belief in God appears. When you haven’t performed any duty, or done anything practical for God’s house, you’ll feel that you aren’t qualified, and these things won’t arise in you. But when you are capable of doing something, and feel that you’re a bit superior to most people, and that you can preach some doctrines, then these things will**

arise. For example, when a leader is being elected, if you've only believed in God for one or two years, you'll feel that your stature is small, that you're unable to preach any sermons, and that you aren't qualified, so you'll step back during the election. After three or five years of belief, you'll be able to preach a few spiritual doctrines, so when the time comes to elect a leader again, you'll proactively reach for that position and pray, 'Oh God! I bear a burden, I'm willing to be a leader in the church, and willing to be considerate of Your intentions. But regardless of whether I am elected or not, I am always willing to submit to Your arrangements.' You'll say that you're willing to submit, but in your heart, you'll think, 'But it would be great if You'd let me have a go at being a leader!' If you have such a demand, will God satisfy it? Certainly not, because this demand of yours is not a legitimate request, but an extravagant desire. Even if you say that you want to become a leader so that you can show consideration for God's burden, using this excuse as your justification, and feeling that this is in line with the truth, what will you think when God doesn't satisfy your demand? What manifestations will you display? (I'll misunderstand God, and wonder why He didn't satisfy me when I just wanted to show consideration for His burden. I'll become negative, resistant, and I'll complain.) You'll become negative, and think, 'The person they elected hasn't believed in God for as long as I have, they're not as well-educated as I am, and their caliber is worse than mine. I can also preach sermons, so in what way are they better than me?' You'll ponder and ponder, but you won't be able to figure it out, so notions will arise in you, and you'll judge God as being unrighteous. Is this not a corrupt disposition? Will you still be able to submit? No. If you didn't have this desire to be a leader, if you could pursue the truth, and if you

possessed self-knowledge, you'd say, 'I'm fine with just being an ordinary follower. I don't possess the truth reality, I am of average humanity, and I'm not very eloquent. I have a bit of experience but I can't really speak about it. I want to speak more about it but I can't explain myself clearly. If I do speak more, it's likely that people will feel fed up with listening to me. I fall too far short of this position. I'm not suited to being a leader, and should just keep learning from others, perform my duty to the best of my ability, and pursue the truth with my feet on the ground. One day, when I have stature and am fit to lead, I won't refuse if elected by my brothers and sisters.' This is the correct state of mind. ... No matter what you do, you must reflect on and come to understand your motives, your point of origin, your intentions, your aims, and all your thoughts, according to the truth, and determine whether they are right or wrong. These things all must have God's words as their foundation and base, so that you don't go down the wrong path. No matter what you want to do, or what you seek, pray, or ask for before God, it must be legitimate and reasonable, it must be something that can be put on the table and approved of by everyone. There's no point in seeking and praying for things that can't be brought out into the open. No matter how much you pray for those things, it will be of no use" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Resolve Their Notions and Misunderstandings of God). What God exposed was exactly my true state. When I first believed in God, I had no desire to be a leader because I felt my stature was small and I was unqualified. As I did my duty over time, I was able to speak some spiritual doctrines and saw some results in my work, so, I thought I had good caliber and capital, was a rare person of talent in the church, and should be elected as a leader. Thus, every election made me eager and I actively did my duty

for the sake of being chosen as a leader. However, when I was not elected, my despicable intentions were completely revealed. Not only did I lose the burden for my duty, not resolving problems even when they were discovered, but I also felt jealousy and hatred, judged the newly elected leader, and even complained about God in my heart, believing that God was unfair and had buried my talent. I saw that I had no submission to God or God-fearing heart at all, and that my evil deeds were caused by the pursuit of status. If my intentions had truly been to safeguard the church work, even as an ordinary believer, I could have been considerate of God's intention and quietly done my main job well. The facts showed that the source and starting point of my actions were both for status. I simply wanted to be a leader and have people revolve around me, and satisfy my ambition and desire to be an "official." With such intentions in doing my duty, not only was I not elected as a leader, but I also failed to do my main job well.

Later, I read a passage of God's words and gained some understanding of my problems. God says: **"Why do all man's misconceptions of God arise? They arise because people cannot measure their own capabilities; to be precise, they do not know what sort of things they are in God's eyes. They rate themselves too highly and estimate their position in God's eyes too highly, and they see what they consider to be a person's worth and capital as the truth, as the standards by which God measures whether they will be saved. This is wrong. You must know what kind of place you have in God's heart, how God views you, and the appropriate position for you to adopt when you approach God. You ought to know this principle; in this way, your views will be aligned with the truth and compatible with those of God. You must possess this reason and be able to submit to God; regardless of how He treats you, you must submit. Then there will no longer be any**

contradictions between you and God. And when God again treats you in His manner, will you not be able to submit? Will you still contend with and oppose God? You will not. Even if you feel some discomfort in your heart, or you feel that God's treatment of you is not as you would wish and you don't understand why He would treat you that way, nevertheless, because you already understand some truths and possess some realities, and because you are able to stand fast in your position, you will no longer fight against God, which means that those actions and behaviors of yours that would cause you to perish will cease to be. And will you not then be safe? Once you are safe, you will feel grounded, which means you have begun to walk the path of Peter" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Attitude Man Should Have Toward God). After reading God's words, I realized that my misunderstanding and judgment of God, and my serious transgression, were due to my overly arrogant nature and overestimation of myself. I thought that although I had believed in God for a short time, I had caliber and work capabilities, had always been a supervisor, and whenever there was important work, the leaders would think of me. I regarded myself as a rare person of talent in the church, so I believed that I should be among the leaders. When my ambitions and desires were not fulfilled and I lost in several elections, I complained and thought God was unrighteous, constantly contending with God. I saw that I lacked self-awareness and could not measure my own capabilities. I had believed in God for a short time and had no work experience. Though I understood some of the professional skills, I was not clear about many truth principles. Every time I encountered difficulties, I earnestly prayed to God and sought principles. When I had the right intentions, I could unconsciously come to understand some things, which was the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and guidance. But instead of thanking

God, I regarded these as capital, boasting that I had good caliber and work capabilities, and should do the duty of a leader. I was truly lacking in reason and self-awareness. At the same time, I also realized that for church leaders and workers elected, they must at least have a right heart and good humanity, and pursue the truth. However, I had been pursuing status, and with several failures in elections, where God did not satisfy my ambitions and desires, I became negative and opposed Him, losing my burden for my duty when I failed to get a position. I was not walking the path of pursuing the truth and truly did not meet the conditions for being a leader. It was right for the brothers and sisters not to choose me. It also made me see that God was checking everything.

Next, I read a passage of God's words, and gained some more understanding about my issue of constantly desiring to be a leader. God says: **"What manifestations of vying for status are associated with this nature of disrupting and disturbing the work of the house of God? Most common is people vying with church leaders for status, which is chiefly manifested in them seizing on certain things about leaders and their errors in order to denigrate and condemn them, and purposefully exposing their revelations of corruption and the failings and shortcomings in their humanity and caliber, particularly when it comes to deviations and mistakes they have made in their work or when handling people. This is the most commonly seen and most blatant manifestation of vying with church leaders for status. In addition, these people do not care about how well church leaders do their work, whether or not they act according to the principles, or whether or not there are issues with their humanity, and are simply defiant toward these leaders. Why are they defiant? Because they also want to be a church leader—this is their ambition, their desire, and so they are**

defiant. No matter how church leaders work or handle problems, these people always seize on things about them, judge and condemn them, and even go so far as to blow things out of proportion, distort facts, and exaggerate things to the greatest extent possible. They do not use the standards that the house of God requires of leaders and workers to measure whether these leaders act according to the principles, whether they are right people, whether they are people who pursue the truth, and whether they have conscience and reason. They do not evaluate leaders according to these principles. Instead, based on their own intentions and aims, they constantly nitpick and invent complaints, finding things to hold against leaders or workers, spreading rumors behind their backs about them doing things that aren't in line with the truth, or exposing their shortcomings. ... What is their goal in doing all this? It's not to help people understand the truth and discern false leaders and antichrists, nor to lead people before God. Instead, their aim is to defeat and bring down the leaders and workers so that everyone sees them as the most suitable candidate for serving as a leader. At this point, their goal will have been achieved, and they will just have to wait for the brothers and sisters to nominate them as a leader. Are there such people in the church? What are their dispositions like? These individuals are vicious in disposition, they do not love the truth at all, and they do not practice it either; they only desire to hold power” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). God exposes that the disposition of those who compete for status is extremely vicious, and that they have no love for the truth whatsoever and have poor humanity. Reflecting on my behavior, I had been overwhelmed by my ambition and desire for power, neglecting my proper duty and continuously vying for status, while also

judging the leader and disturbing the church election. On seeing that Siyu had been elected as a leader, instead of thinking about how to cooperate with her to safeguard the church's work, I had been defiant and indignant, belittling her and looking down on her, and judging her with ulterior motives, hoping that the brothers and sisters would see Siyu as less capable than me, and incompetent in the duty of leader, so that I would have a chance to be chosen. This had ultimately led to the brothers and sisters forming a negative impression of Siyu, which had caused disturbance to the church election. After the sister's pruning, although I hadn't dared to casually pass judgment in the church anymore, my inner defiance hadn't been resolved, and I had continued to vent in front of my family, truly lacking any ounce of reason! When I thought about it, I realized that those who are elected as leaders are in the process of pursuing the truth, and they all have their deficiencies and inadequacies. If I'd had a right heart and been someone who safeguarded the church's interests, I wouldn't have belittled or looked down on a leader when I saw her shortcomings, but would have harmoniously cooperated with her, so that we complemented each other's strengths and weaknesses. This was what a person with humanity would have done. I thought of those evil people who had been expelled from the church. In their competition for status they had opposed leaders at every opportunity, often nitpicking, and sowing discord behind their backs, causing the brothers and sisters to develop biases against the leaders, which had ultimately led to the disruption and disturbance of the church's work and their expulsion. Realizing this, I was deeply afraid, knowing that if I did not repent, I would be revealed and eliminated by God like those evil ones. I prayed to God in my heart, asking for His mercy and salvation. I then thought of some of God's words: **"Not having status is your protection. As an ordinary follower, you may never have the**

chance to do great evil, and the probability of you being punished could be zero. However, the moment you gain status, the probability of you committing evil is one hundred percent, as is the probability of you being punished, and then it's all over for you, and you will have utterly destroyed any chance you may have had to attain salvation. If you have ambitions and desires, then you should hurry and pray to God, seek the truth to resolve the problem, rely on God and practice self-restraint, and do not revel in your position, and then you will be able to perform your duty normally" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part One)). Reflecting on my repeated failures in elections, I realized there was God's intention. My desire for status was too strong, and my nature was very arrogant. If I gained a position, anyone who didn't listen to me or threatened my status would be suppressed or excluded by me. Eventually, I would commit many evil deeds and be revealed and eliminated like an antichrist. I felt that God not giving me status was a protection for me. God's love was hidden behind these events, but I misunderstood and complained about Him. I didn't know what was good for me, which really hurt God's heart. After understanding God's intention, I felt especially brightened and liberated, and the barrier between God and I was removed.

Later, I read these words of God: **"Whenever you do anything, and in whatever context, you must seek truth, practice being someone who is honest and obedient to God, and put aside the pursuit of status and reputation. When you have the constant thought and desire to compete for status, then you must realize what bad things this kind of state will lead to if left unsolved. So waste no time in searching for the truth, overcome your desire to compete for status while it is in the nascent stage, and replace it with practicing the truth. When you practice the**

truth, your desire and ambition to compete for status will be diminished, and you will not disturb the work of the church. In this way, your actions will be remembered and approved of by God. So what am I trying to emphasize? It is this: You must rid yourself of your desires and ambitions before they flower, come to fruition, and lead to great calamity. If you don't address them while they are still in their infancy, you will miss a great opportunity; and once they have led to great calamity, it will be too late to solve them. If you lack even the will to rebel against the flesh, it will be very difficult for you to set foot upon the path of pursuing the truth; if you encounter setbacks and failure in your pursuit of fame, gain, and status, and you do not come to your senses, then this is dangerous: There is a possibility that you will be eliminated" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God's words gave me a way to practice. I saw that letting go of status required seeking the truth. When I had ambitions and desires, I needed to replace them with practicing the truth. I must promptly rebel against my incorrect thoughts and ideas and quickly seek the truth to resolve my issues. I also realized that God determines one's outcome not based on their status or identity, but on how much one has entered into the truth reality, and whether one has genuine submission to God and can live by His words when things happen. After understanding God's intention, I was willing to submit. Since I was assigned to do the text-based duty, I should accept and obey and do my duty well in a down-to-earth manner.

In March 2023, the church held another election to fill leadership positions. Although I still had ambitions and desires, thinking this was another chance to run and hoping to be elected, I knew my desire for status was too strong, which could easily lead me to walk the path of an antichrist. I couldn't keep pursuing status. I had to restrain and rebel against myself. I

prayed to God to protect me from being constrained by status. If I were elected, I would do my duty properly. If I weren't, I wouldn't be negative or let it affect my duty. Whether I had a position or not, I was willing to submit and do my duty well. On the election day, my mentality was not to fight desperately for a leadership role. I fellowshiped my experience of pursuing status and expressed my disgust and loathing for my previous actions that resisted God due to my pursuit of status. After my fellowship, I sat there, feeling very calm. Unexpectedly, when the election results were announced, I had the most votes and was elected as a church leader. In the past, I would have been very happy, but now I knew this duty carried a great responsibility. I accepted it as a heavy responsibility, rather than enjoying the prestige that came with the position. I knew that this little change in me was entirely due to God's salvation. Thank God!

34. Emerging From the Shadow of Mother's Passing

By Cheng Xin, China

In 2012, I was arrested by the police for doing my duty and sentenced to five years in prison. At the time, my mother was already over 60. She was suffering from hemiplegia, but she still came to visit me in jail. Seeing that my mother couldn't move around easily or stand steadily, I was incredibly upset. She had raised me for all these years, and not only had she not enjoyed my filial care, she also still worried about me in her advanced age. After getting out of jail, I found out that while I was imprisoned, the police had come to my home to ask about me. They recorded my mother and intimidated her. She was frightened, and her health condition was aggravated. I felt that I really owed her, and I thought, "From now on, I have to take good care of my mom and help her suffer less." But I didn't get my wish. The police were still investigating and watching me nonstop, and for my own safety, I had to leave home to do my duty.

Two years later, I heard that my mother was at my sister's home, so I secretly went to see her. My mother's vision had worsened and she couldn't see clearly; she was hobbling along, leaning on a cane. It was difficult for her to move at all, and she had trouble speaking. It was so hard to see her like that. Especially when she asked me, "When will you be back next?" I didn't know how to answer. Because the police were still looking for me, I had taken a risk visiting this time. If I left, I didn't know when I'd be back. My mother looked at me, waiting for my response, but I just didn't know, so I just stroked her shoulder and didn't make a sound. After I left, my mother's question echoed in my ears. The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. I couldn't even make a simple promise to her, and I felt that I

had failed her. Before long, I heard that my sister had been arrested because of her faith in God. I no longer dared to go to her home. It felt like a knife twisting in my heart. My mother was so old, lying in bed, unable to move. She could pass away any day. As her daughter, I didn't even have a chance to fulfill my responsibility to her. Not long after, the coronavirus outbreak hit, and people were dying everywhere. I couldn't help starting to worry again, thinking, "Is my mom going to get the virus? Will she be able to evade this disaster? If she dies, I wouldn't even have gotten to see her one last time." Later, I found a way to contact my family. I found out that my mother had passed away almost a month ago. Hearing this news, I sat in my chair, my mind blank, trying hard to fight my tears back. I hadn't seen my mother one final time before she passed. Had she thought that I had no conscience? Had she said that I was cruel? When I got back, I cried my heart out. My mother had raised me for all these years, yet when she was alive, I wasn't able to take care of her, and when she died, I wasn't able to see her one last time. My conscience was plaguing me, and a sense of guilt had enveloped me. During that time, I saw old people basking in the sun by their front door, with their sons and daughters at their side taking care of them, and I thought, "I didn't keep my mother company when she sat under the sun by her front door. I didn't trim her fingernails or cut her hair." When the sister in my host family cooked a nice meal, I also thought, "I wasn't able to cook a meal like this for my mom, and I won't ever get the chance again." During the Spring Festival, I saw that everyone on the streets was hurrying back to their hometowns. Some of them were driving with their kids back to their hometowns to visit the elderly. I counted how many years it had been since I had accompanied my mother. During that time, I was listless and aimless. Although I was doing my duty, whenever I had any spare time, I would think of my mother and feel indebted to her. My heart

wouldn't calm down when I read God's words, and I was always sleepy. I started being perfunctory and going through the motions in my duty, and I didn't want to talk to the brothers and sisters I was partnered with. When we studied professional skills together, my mind was elsewhere. When the leader came to ask about the work, I didn't even want to reply, and even if I did, I only spoke a few perfunctory words. I didn't pay much heed to my duty. I wallowed in degeneration, and produced no results in my duty. I even wanted to get a job on top of my duty, not wanting to spend all my time expending myself.

Later on, I realized it was dangerous for me to continue like this, and I hastened to pray and read God's words. I read God's words that said: **"Your parents getting sick would already be a big shock for you, so your parents passing away would be an even greater shock. Then, before this has happened, how should you resolve the unexpected blow that it will deal to you, so that it will not impact, interfere with, or affect your performance of your duty or the path that you walk? First, let's look at what exactly death is all about, and what exactly passing away is all about—doesn't it mean that a person is leaving this world? (Yes.) It means that the life a person possesses, which has a physical presence, is removed from the material world that humans can see, and disappears. That person then goes on to live in another world, in another form. The lives of your parents departing means that the relationship you have with them in this world has dissolved, disappeared, and ended. They are living in another world, in other forms. As for how their lives will go in that other world, whether they will return to this world, meet you again, or have any kind of fleshly relationship or emotional entanglements with you, this is ordained by God, and it has nothing to do with you. In sum, their passing away means that their missions in**

this world are over, and a full stop has been placed behind them. Their missions in this life and in this world have ended, so your relationship with them has also ended. ... Your parents passing away will just be the last news that you hear about them in this world, and the last of the hurdles that you see or hear about when it comes to their experiences of being born, growing old, getting sick, and dying in their lives, that is all. Their deaths won't take anything away or give anything to you, they will have simply died, their journeys as people will have come to an end. So, when it comes to them passing away, it doesn't matter whether these are accidental deaths, normal deaths, deaths from illness, and so on, in any case, if not for God's sovereignty and arrangements, no person or force could take away their lives. Their passing away only means the end of their physical lives. If you miss them and yearn for them, or feel ashamed of yourself due to your feelings, you shouldn't feel any of these things, and it is not necessary to feel them. They have departed from this world, so missing them is redundant, isn't it? If you think: 'Did my parents miss me over all those years? How much more did they suffer because I wasn't by their side showing filial piety to them for so many years? Over all these years, I've always been wishing that I could spend a few days with them, I never expected that they'd pass away so soon. I feel sad and guilty.' It is not necessary for you to think in this way, their deaths have nothing to do with you. Why do they have nothing to do with you? Because, even if you showed them filial piety or accompanied them, this is not the obligation or task that God has given you. God has ordained how much good fortune and how much suffering your parents will encounter from you—this has nothing at all to do with you. They will not live longer because you are with them, and they will not live shorter lives because you're far from them

and couldn't be with them often. God has ordained how long they will live, and it has nothing to do with you. Therefore, if you hear news that your parents have passed away during your lifetime, you do not need to feel guilty. You should approach this matter in the correct way and accept it" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). Reading God's words, I was very touched, especially when I read **"God has ordained how much good fortune and how much suffering your parents will encounter from you—this has nothing at all to do with you."** No matter what suffering my mother had endured in her life, and no matter how she passed away in the end, it was all ordained by God. Even if I was nearby and took care of her in her daily life, I couldn't have helped her alleviate her physical illness at all, let alone kept her alive. Birth, old age, sickness, and death are the laws of existence that God ordained for man; every person has to face them, and no one can break them. I knew I shouldn't live in a state of guilt. I should keep a rational attitude and accept and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. My mother was so old, and her death was a normal one. Her death meant that her mission in this world was over. She had been ill for more than 20 years, and many people with the same illness as hers died after just a few years. That she could live until she did and hear the words spoken from God's mouth was already the grace and blessing of God. Recognizing this, my heart was set free somewhat, and I didn't feel such self-reproach and oppression for my mother's death.

During a gathering one day, I read a passage of God's words: **"Some people abandon their families because they believe in God and perform their duties. They become famous because of this and the government frequently searches their house, harasses their parents, and even threatens their parents to hand them over. All their neighbors talk**

about them, saying, ‘This person has no conscience. They don’t care for their elderly parents. Not only are they unfilial, but they also cause so much trouble for their parents. They are an unfilial child!’ Are any of these words in line with the truth? (No.) But aren’t all these words considered right in the eyes of the nonbelievers? Among nonbelievers, they think this is the most legitimate and reasonable way of looking at it, and that it is in line with human ethics, and in accordance with the standards of human conduct. No matter how much content is included in these standards, such as how to show filial respect to parents, how to take care of them in their old age and arrange their funerals, or how much to repay them, and regardless of whether these standards accord with the truth or not, in the eyes of nonbelievers, they are positive things, they are positive energy, they are right, and they are considered irreproachable within all groups of people. Among nonbelievers, these are the standards for people to live by, and you have to do these things to be an adequately good person in their hearts. Before you believed in God and understood the truth, didn’t you also firmly believe that such conduct was being a good person? (Yes.) Moreover, you also used these things to evaluate yourself and restrain yourself, and you required yourself to be this kind of person. If you wanted to be a good person, you must have surely included these things in your standards of conduct: how to be filial to your parents, how to make them feel less worried, how to bring them honor and credit, and how to bring glory to your ancestors. These were the standards of conduct in your heart and the direction of your conduct. However, after you listened to God’s words and His sermons, your viewpoint began to change, and you understood that you have to forsake everything to perform your duty as a created being, and that God requires people to conduct themselves

this way. Before you were certain that performing your duty as a created being was the truth, you thought you should be filial to your parents, but you also felt you should perform your duty as a created being, and you felt conflicted inside. Through the continuous watering and shepherding of God's words, you gradually came to understand the truth, and it was then that you realized that performing your duty as a created being is perfectly natural and justified. Up until this day, many people have been able to accept the truth and completely abandon the standards of conduct from man's traditional notions and imaginings. When you completely let go of these things, you are no longer constrained by words of judgment and condemnation from nonbelievers when you follow God and perform your duty as a created being, and you could cast them off easily" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Truth Reality?). God really exposed the thoughts I had in my mind. In my eyes, if people are filial to their parents, take care of them when they're old, and arrange their funerals, then they are dutiful; they are good people. If one cannot be filial, then they have no conscience and are not good people. I judged whether a person is good or bad based on ethics, virtues, and morality. This does not conform to God's words at all, nor does it conform to the truth. I treated traditional culture as a positive thing, thinking that my mother had raised me, so I should look after her in her old age. Because I couldn't be filial to my parents while doing my duty, and because my mother got tied up in my trouble after I was arrested and imprisoned, I thought that I had no conscience, no humanity. I now saw that my view was the same as nonbelievers; it was the view of disbelievers. I thought of the disciples who followed the Lord Jesus, as well as those missionaries. They traveled to faraway lands in order to propagate God's gospel. In people's eyes, them casting aside their parents and families was

cold-blooded and devoid of humanity. But they, who propagated the gospel and fulfilled their duties, were the people who truly had conscience and humanity. Just as God's words say: **"You may be exceptionally amiable and devoted toward your relatives, friends, wife (or husband), sons and daughters, and parents, and never take advantage of others, but if you are incapable of compatibility with Christ, if you are unable to interact in harmony with Him, then even if you expend your all in relief to your neighbors or take meticulous care of your father, mother, and members of your household, I would say that you are still an evil person, and moreover one full of cunning tricks"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). From God's words, I saw that regardless of how well one takes care of their family members, if they cannot practice the truth, do their duty well, or be compatible with Christ, then they are an evil person. After my mother passed away, I was always grieving, and I didn't think of how to do my duty well, even regretting that I spent all my time doing it. I had believed in God for so many years, yet my views on things were still the same as nonbelievers. I was a disbeliever. I was very upset, and, crying, I prayed and repented to God, expressing my willingness to reverse my views and not live in this negative state.

One day, I read more of God's words: **"When it comes to handling parents' expectations, is it clear what principles should be followed and what burdens should be let go? (Yes.) So, what exactly are the burdens that people carry here? They must listen to their parents and let their parents live a good life; everything their parents do is for their own good; and they must do what their parents say to be filial. Additionally, as adults, they must do things for their parents, repay their parents' kindness, be filial to them, accompany them, not make them feel sad or**

disappointed, not let them down, and do everything they can to minimize their suffering or even eliminate it entirely. If you can't achieve this, you are ungrateful, unfilial, you deserve to be struck down by thunder and spurned by others, and you are a bad person. Are these your burdens? (Yes.) Since these things are people's burdens, people should accept the truth and properly face them. Only by accepting the truth can these burdens and wrong thoughts and views be let go of and changed. If you don't accept the truth, is there another path for you to take? (No.) Thus, whether it's letting go of burdens of the family or of the flesh, it all starts with accepting the correct thoughts and views and accepting the truth. As you start accepting the truth, these wrong thoughts and views within you will gradually be dismantled, discerned, and seen through, and then gradually they will be rejected. During the process of dismantling, discerning, and then letting go of and rejecting these wrong thoughts and views, you will gradually change your attitude and approach toward these matters. Those thoughts that come from your human conscience or feelings will gradually weaken; they will no longer trouble or bind you deep within your mind, control or influence your life, or interfere with your performance of duty. For example, if you have accepted the correct thoughts and views and accepted this aspect of the truth, when you hear the news of your parents' death, you will merely shed tears for them without thinking about how during these years you haven't repaid their kindness in raising you, how you made them suffer so much, how you didn't recompense them in the slightest, or how you didn't let them live a good life. You won't blame yourself for these things anymore—rather, you will exhibit normal expressions stemming from the needs of normal human feelings; you will shed tears and then experience a bit of longing

for them. Soon these things will become natural and normal, and you will quickly immerse yourself in a normal life and performing your duties; you will not be troubled by this matter. But if you don't accept these truths, then when you hear the news of your parents' passing, you will cry endlessly. You will feel pity for your parents, that for their whole lives they didn't have it easy, and that they raised such an unfilial child as you; when they were sick, you didn't wait on them at their bedside, and when they died, you didn't wail at their funeral or go into mourning; you let them down, you disappointed them, and you didn't let them live a good life. You will live with this sense of guilt for a long time, and whenever you think about it you will cry and feel a dull aching in your heart. Whenever you encounter related circumstances or people, events, and things, you will have an emotional reaction; this sense of guilt may accompany you for the rest of your life. What is the reason for this? It is that you never accepted the truth or the correct thoughts and views as your life; instead, your old thoughts and views have continued to hold sway over you, influencing your life. So, you will spend the remainder of your life in pain because of your parents' passing. This continuous suffering will have consequences that go well beyond a little fleshly discomfort; it will affect your life, your attitude toward performing your duties, your attitude toward the work of the church, your attitude toward God, as well as your attitude toward any person or matter that touches your soul. You may also become disheartened and discouraged toward more matters, become despondent and passive, lose faith in life, lose enthusiasm and motivation for anything, and so on. In time, the impact will not be limited to your simple daily life; it will also affect your attitude toward performing your duties and the path you take in life. This is very

dangerous. The consequence of this danger may be that you cannot perform your duties as a created being adequately, and you may even stop performing your duties halfway or harbor a resistant mood and attitude toward the duties you perform. In short, this kind of situation will inevitably worsen over time and cause your mood, emotions, and mentality to evolve in a malignant direction” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of

the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (16)). I thought of how during these years that I believed in God, I had always treated traditional sayings “Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else” and “Do not travel far while your parents yet live” as positive things, as criteria for how I conducted myself. When doing my duty conflicted with taking care of my mother, although I had left home to do my duty, I always worried about her, and felt indebted to her because I wasn’t taking care of her. After I heard that my mother had passed away, I lived in self-reproach and pain because I didn’t look after her in her old age and arrange her funeral. My mother had raised me, but not only had I not taken care of her, I wasn’t even able to see her one last time before she died. I felt I had no conscience and no humanity, and thought I would be cursed at and criticized by others. The reason I was living inside the pain was that I treated the sayings “Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else” and “Take care of your parents in their old age and arrange their funerals” as truths that I should abide by. Because I had not followed these sayings, I lived inside my guilt, unable to forgive myself, and regarded my duty with passivity. I had been misled by these traditional notions. When I heard of my mother’s passing, I was unable to submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements, living in a state of melancholy, regretful and self-blaming, being negative and slacking off in my duty. Without realizing it, I had stood in opposition to God, rebelling against and resisting Him.

After this, I read another passage of God's words and learned how I ought to regard my parents. God's words say: **"Some people want to perform their duties but also feel that they must honor their parents, which involves feelings. If you just keep pruning your feelings, telling yourself not to think about your parents and family, and to only think about God and focus on the truth, but you still can't help but think about your parents, this cannot solve the fundamental problem. To solve this problem, you need to dissect the things you thought were right, along with the sayings, knowledge, and theories that you inherited and that align with human notions. In addition, when dealing with your parents, whether you fulfill your obligations as a child to take care of them must be entirely based on your personal conditions and God's orchestrations. Doesn't this explain the matter perfectly? When some people leave their parents, they feel that they owe their parents a lot and that they do nothing for their parents. But then when they do live together, they are not filial to their parents at all, and they do not fulfill any of their obligations. Is this a truly filial person? This is saying empty words. No matter what you do, what you think, or what you plan, those things are not important. What is important is whether you can understand and truly believe that all created beings are in the hands of God. Some parents have that blessing and that destiny to be able to enjoy domestic bliss and the happiness of a large and prosperous family. This is God's sovereignty, and a blessing God gives them. Some parents don't have this destiny; God has not arranged this for them. They are not blessed to enjoy having a happy family, or to enjoy having their children stay by their side. This is God's orchestration and people cannot force this. No matter what, ultimately when it comes to filial piety, people must at least have a mindset of**

submission. If the environment permits and you have the means to do so, then you can show your parents filial piety. If the environment does not permit and you lack the means, then do not try to force it—what is this called? (Submission.) This is called submission. How does this submission come about? What is the basis for submission? It is based on all of these things being arranged by God and ruled over by God. Though people may wish to choose, they cannot, they do not have the right to choose, and they should submit. When you feel that people should submit and that everything is orchestrated by God, don't you feel calmer in your heart? (Yes.) Then will your conscience still feel rebuked? It will no longer feel constantly rebuked, and the idea of not having been filial to your parents will no longer dominate you. Occasionally, you may still think about it as these are some normal thoughts or instincts within humanity, and no one can avoid them” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Truth Reality?). God speaks very clearly about the principles of practice for how to regard one's parents. That should be based primarily on their own conditions and abilities. When one's conditions are permitting and their abilities are sufficient, they can fulfill their responsibility and be filial to their parents. However, if the situation doesn't permit this, then one should submit to God's orchestration and arrangements. These years, not being able to take care of my mother didn't mean that I didn't want to take care of her or didn't want to fulfill my responsibility. It was because the police were always pursuing me. I couldn't even ensure my own safety, so how could I take care of my mother? I didn't hate the Communist Party, but blamed God. I saw that I had truly confused the facts and couldn't tell right from wrong; I was impossible to reason with! I often felt I hadn't taken care of my mother, and hadn't helped her live happily and looked after her in her later years or

arranged her funeral, and so I felt that I owed her. I thought that under my care, my mother would have lived happily. In reality, this was a mistaken view. My mother suffered from hemiplegia for many years, and her body ached all over. Before, when I was at home taking care of her, I was contacting the doctor and getting her medications. Even though I was trying to have her treated and caring for her, this did not alleviate her pain in the slightest. How much suffering my mother should endure was ordained by God. Now, my mother had passed away, which meant that her time had come. She was no longer suffering from physical illness. This was a good thing, and I ought to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. However, I hadn't sought the truth in this matter or submitted to God's determinations. I was negative and slacked off in my duty, and the essence of my behavior was opposed to God; I had no humanity or reason whatsoever!

I read another passage of God's words which further clarified how to regard one's parents. God's words say: **"Outwardly, it appears that your parents gave birth to your fleshly life, and that it was your parents who gave you life. But, from God's perspective, and from the root of this matter, your fleshly life was not given to you by your parents, because people cannot create life. In simple terms, no person can create man's breath. The reason why the flesh of each person is able to become a person is because they have that breath. Man's life lies in this breath, and it is the sign of a living person. People have this breath and life, and the source and origin of these things are not their parents. It is just that people were produced by means of their parents giving birth to them—at the root, it is God who gives people these things. Therefore, your parents are not the masters of your life, the Master of your life is God. God created mankind, He created the lives of mankind, and He**

gave mankind the breath of life, which is the origin of man's life. Therefore, isn't the line 'Your parents are not the masters of your life' easy to understand? Your breath was not given to you by your parents, and much less is its continuation given to you by your parents. God looks after and rules over every day of your life. Your parents cannot decide how every day of your life goes, whether each day is happy and goes smoothly, who you meet every day, or what environment you live in each day. It is merely that God looks after you through your parents—your parents are simply the people that God sent to look after you. When you were born, it was not your parents who gave you life, so was it your parents who gave you the life that allowed you to live until now? It still wasn't. The origin of your life is still God, and not your parents"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). God's words are very clear—the origin of man's life is God. Although my mother gave birth to me, my life was gifted to me by God. Without God's protection and provision, my mother wouldn't have been able to raise me. God used my mother to raise me, used her to bring me before Him, and used her to get rid of my anxiety about trouble back home. No matter how much my mother expended for me, all of this originated from what God bestowed upon me. But instead, I had stood things on their head, believing that my mother expended too much for me and always wanting to repay my mother, and so I ignored God's sovereignty and determinations. In reality, no matter how much my mother expended, she was fulfilling her responsibility as a mother, which was also God's arrangement and sovereignty. The One I should thank was God. I also understood that I had my own mission in this world, which was to do my duty as a created being, not to repay my mother's kindness. Recognizing this, I no longer lived in guilt, reproaching myself and feeling indebted. I was able to quiet my heart and do my duty.

God's words are a beacon of light. If it were not for the timely enlightenment and guidance of God's words, I would still be unable to discern the sayings "Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else" and "Do not travel far while your parents yet live" that Satan had instilled in me, and I would live inside my feeling of indebtedness toward my mother, suffering the harm of Satan. Now, I finally see clearly, that traditional culture is a reactionary fallacy that resists God, and that these thoughts and views are very misleading. It was God's words that brought me away from these satanic fallacies, and made me able to regard my mother's death correctly. My heart was liberated and set free! Thank God for saving me!

35. Indelible Regret

By Pan Li, China

One day in November of 2020, I heard that a church leader named Zhao Jun had been arrested by the police. Because I was relatively familiar with the situation in Zhao Jun's church, my upper leader asked me to go understand what had happened, how Zhao Jun had been arrested, and to do the work of handling the aftermath in a timely manner. Upon receiving this assignment, I felt a bit intimidated, thinking, "Given that Zhao Jun was just arrested, it will be very dangerous for me to go to that church now. If I get caught by the officers staking out our church, what will happen to me? Won't I be walking right into a trap?" But then I thought about how Zhao Jun had been in contact with many people and host families and they would all be in danger given that Zhao Jun had been arrested. I knew that I had to notify everyone to take precautions immediately. Having made up my mind, I quickly headed off to the church to notify the brothers and sisters. The next day, I learned that there had been incidents with two of the host families I'd visited the previous night. Not long after I left, one family had their house raided and the other family's husband and wife were both arrested. If I had left just a little later, I would have been arrested too. In December, there was another string of large-scale arrests at different churches. The sister I partnered with, along with over thirty brothers and sisters, including leaders and workers, were arrested one after another. This was a very dangerous situation and it was crucial that I notify other brothers and sisters who were subjected to hidden dangers that they needed to go into hiding and transfer the books of God's words to others for safekeeping. At the time, we had already lost contact with certain churches, there were no suitable homes in which to keep books of God's words and church

property, and some of our brothers and sisters didn't have access to safe host homes. Faced with such a difficult situation, I felt quite weak, afraid and unsettled. It seemed like I could be arrested at any moment. I thought to myself, "What if I'm arrested and beaten to death at such a young age?" I went through the entire day with a worried frown and the days seemed to crawl by at a snail's pace. I kept wondering when this situation would finally let up. At that time, I heard that several tens of special police from the provincial level had arrived with the specific goal of arresting believers. I became even more nervous and scared, thinking, "I'm already being pursued for arrest, so won't I just be offering myself up to the police by transferring books? If they follow and arrest me, the police certainly won't let me off easy. The CCP can kill believers with impunity—if they arrest me, will they beat me to death? I've believed in God, forsaken and expended myself for so many years, all just to be beaten to death? Will I still be able to attain salvation? If I can't, won't all my years of suffering have been in vain? If I'm given a years-long sentence, how will I withstand life in jail?" I couldn't bear to think of life in jail, where one is better off dead than to have to live in such conditions. I lived in constant fear and didn't dare transfer the books, so I wrote a letter to Brother Li Yi, asking him to transfer the books as quickly as possible. However, I never received a response from him after writing several letters. Another few days went by and the books still hadn't been transferred. I was worried that my upper leader would blame me for being irresponsible in my duty, so I asked the leader to assign someone else to handle the aftermath. To cover over my personal intentions and motives, I said that I had a small stature, that I had no experience in this kind of situation, and for certain aspects of the work, I needed to discuss and consult with someone else. This would make the leader think I was doing my best to cooperate and was bearing a burden in

the church's work. That way even if problems arose the leader wouldn't blame me. Soon after that, my leader assigned Sister Yun Qing to work with me on handling the aftermath.

After that, the situation became tenser by the day—reports of brothers and sisters being arrested came in one after another and I also heard that the police had obtained the information on a lot of brothers and sisters. I wrote letters to group leaders urging them to notify all brothers and sisters to go into hiding right away, but I just wasn't in a place where I could concern myself with the brothers and sisters' safety. I felt very anxious and afraid, worrying that one day soon, I too would be arrested, so I failed to do some detailed work, didn't notify people that needed to hide as I should have and, as a result, a sister named Wang Lan was arrested. Later on, she was sent home and died within ten hours. I felt very guilty—if I had put a little more effort in and upheld my responsibility to notify Wang Lan in time that she needed to go into hiding, she might not have been arrested and died. I was responsible for Wang Lan being arrested and there was no excuse for it.

Not long after that, my upper leader came to me with a report that the brothers and sisters had written up on me, exposing how at the most crucial moment, I failed to protect my brothers and sisters, didn't transfer the books of God's words in a timely manner, selfishly and despicably protected myself, and didn't protect and maintain the church's work. The leader then proceeded to dismiss me on the spot. I realized that I had been living in cowardice during that time and had failed to do real work. I deserved to be dismissed. In the midst of my devotionals and reflection, I came upon this passage of God's words: **“The first fundamental thing that leaders and workers must do is to keep a proper watch over the various material items of God's house, to properly carry out checks and keep guard for God's house, not letting any items get damaged, wasted, or taken into**

the possession of evil people. This is the minimum they should do. As soon as you're chosen as a leader or a worker, God's house regards you as its steward: You're of the managerial class, and the task that you shoulder is heavier than that of others. You bear a great responsibility. That's why your every attitude, your every action, your every plan for handling issues, and your every method for resolving problems, all involve the interests of God's house. If you don't even consider the interests of God's house or take them to heart, you're unfit to be a steward of His house. ... So, when it comes to selecting leaders and workers, looking at this from the perspective of humanity, what's the most basic thing that they should possess? They must have a conscience and a sense of justice, and their motives should be proper. Their humanity must first pass the bar. No matter how much work capability they possess, or what level of caliber they possess, people of that sort will be up-to-standard stewards if they serve as supervisors. At the very least, they'll be able to uphold the interests of God's house and the common interests of the brothers and sisters. They absolutely won't sell out the brothers' and sisters' interests, nor those of God's house. When the interests of God's house and the brothers and sisters are about to come to harm or injury, they'll have thought of it beforehand, and they'll be the first to step forward and safeguard them, even if doing so will affect their own safety, or require them to pay a price or suffer. These are all things that people with a conscience and reason can do. Some false leaders and workers rush to find a safe place to hide themselves away in when they're faced with dangerous circumstances, yet with the important items of God's house—books of God's words, cell phones, computers, and so on—they neither care about them nor ask after them. If they were worried about how them being arrested

would affect the bigger picture of the church's work, they could send others to handle these things—yet these false leaders hide only for their own safety's sake. They're scared to death, and in order to ensure their own safety, they don't do what they can. There are therefore many instances where false leaders' negligence, inaction, and irresponsibility cause various items of God's house and offerings to God to be plundered and taken by the great red dragon when dangerous situations arise, which leads to serious losses. When those situations have just arisen in the church, the first thought of leaders and workers should be to put the equipment and material items of God's house in suitable places, to hand them off to suitable people for management; the great red dragon absolutely must not be allowed to take them. But false leaders never have such things in mind; they never put the interests of God's house first, instead they put their own safety first. False leaders' failure to do real work often causes various important items of God's house to suffer losses or damages. Is this not a serious dereliction of duty on the part of false leaders?" (The Word, Vol. 5. The

Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (11)). God's words clearly described the responsibilities of a leader. A leader should have humanity and a sense of justice and should be trustworthy. In crucial moments, leaders should always protect brothers and sisters and safeguard the books of God's words, even if it means undergoing suffering and compromising their own personal interests. False leaders are incredibly selfish and despicable and even if they do carry out work from time to time, it's always the work that they prefer. In all things, they consider their own interests and never weigh the interests of the house of God at all. Such people have poor character and God despises them. By comparison, I saw that I was no different than the false leaders God's words exposed. When

arrests began happening in the church, I passed off dangerous work to other people, asking Li Yi to transfer the books, and when he didn't respond to my letters in time, I didn't transfer the books quickly myself, instead writing a letter to my upper leader explaining that I had a small stature and asking the leader to assign someone else to do that work. I made excuses to protect myself and passed off dangerous work onto others in order to not put myself at risk. As our environment became more and more worse, I just didn't feel like getting into the details of handling the aftermath, instead just going through the motions and acting like I was working, delegating work from on high, and passing off all the work of handling the aftermath to the group leaders, so that they were forced to show up and resolve situations themselves. When I heard that Wang Lan was in danger of being arrested, I should have promptly written a letter to remind her to go into hiding. If I had, perhaps she wouldn't have been arrested and lost her life. But I was living in fear and timidity and didn't notify people as I should have. Some of the brothers and sisters had become negative and weak, but I didn't fellowship with and support them. I considered how to protect my interests from being harmed in all situations and didn't pay the slightest mind to the church's work. How selfish and despicable I was! As a church leader, it was my responsibility to protect God's chosen people and the interests of God's house, but at the most crucial moment I shrunk from my duty. I was selfish, despicable, only cared about myself and didn't have the slightest bit of conscience or reason. As a result, my sister had been arrested and tortured to death, the church's work was delayed and I committed an eternal transgression.

Later, I came across this passage of God's words: **“Doing one's duty is not a minor matter; people are most revealed in the performance of their duty, and God determines people's outcomes based on their**

consistent performance while doing their duty. What does it signify when someone doesn't do their duty well? It signifies that they don't accept the truth or truly repent, and are eliminated by God. When false leaders and false workers get dismissed, what does this represent? This is the attitude of God's house toward such people and, of course, it also represents God's attitude toward such people. So, what is God's attitude toward useless people such as these? He spurns them, condemns them, and eliminates them. So, do you still want to indulge in the benefits of status and be a false leader?" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). After reading God's words, tears came streaming down my face. I saw that my dismissal was a sign of God's wrath and got the sense that God's righteous disposition is unoffendable. Thinking back on how I always considered my own safety first, didn't protect the church's work, didn't consider the safety of my brothers and sisters, leading to irreversible consequences, I was incredibly regretful. Despite coming out unscathed, I hadn't fulfilled my responsibilities, had committed a transgression that I could never make up for and caused God to hate and despise me. It was my own fault that I had been reported by my brothers and sisters. During that time, I would often cry while thinking of this and hated myself for being so covetous of life and afraid of death. Each time this was brought up, I would feel a dull pain in my heart and felt that I owed God and my brothers and sisters. I hated myself for being no better than a beast and thought that there was no punishment from God too severe for me.

After that, I began seeking to understand why it was that I always tried to protect myself when faced with difficult situations. I came upon this passage of God's words: **"Until people have experienced God's work and understood the truth, it is Satan's nature that takes charge and**

dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong feelings? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within man. So what is Satan's poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, 'How should people live? What should people live for?' people will answer, 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's philosophy and logic have become people's lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind's satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind's existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by this venom of Satan, right up to the **present day**' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). Through reading God's words, I realized that the satanic poison "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" had taken deep root within me and become my standard for how I acted as a person. When faced with dangers, I continually protected myself and showed no concern for the interests of the house of God, only worrying about how I could avoid being arrested and passing off dangerous work to other people. All I could think about was my own safety, I didn't feel like doing the work of

handling the aftermath, and didn't fulfill my responsibilities. It was only because other brothers and sisters ended up transferring the books of God's words in time that the church's interests were not compromised. I was living according to Satan's poisons and had become incredibly selfish, despicable and completely lacking in humanity. Time after time, I failed to practice the truth, didn't have the slightest loyalty to my duty and God hated and was disgusted with my behavior. If I still didn't repent and transform, I would lose my chance at salvation. It was then that I realized how deeply corrupted my disposition was and that this dismissal was God's way of saving me.

I then came across this passage of God's words: **“How did those disciples of the Lord Jesus die? Among the disciples, there were those who were stoned, dragged behind a horse, crucified upside down, dismembered by five horses—every sort of death befell them. What was the reason for their deaths? Were they lawfully executed for their crimes? No. They were condemned, beaten, scolded, and put to death because they spread the Lord's gospel and were rejected by the people of the world—that is how they were martyred. ... Actually, this was how their bodies died and passed away; this was their means of departure from the human world, yet that did not mean their outcome was the same. No matter what the means of their death and departure was nor how it happened, it was not how God defined the final outcomes of those lives, of those created beings. This is something you must see clearly. On the contrary, they used precisely those means to condemn this world and to testify to God's deeds. These created beings used their most precious lives—they used the last moment of their lives to testify to God's deeds, to testify to God's great power, and to declare to Satan and the world that God's deeds are right, that the Lord Jesus**

is God, that He is the Lord, and God's incarnate flesh. Even down to the final moment of their lives, they never denied the name of the Lord Jesus. Was this not a form of judgment upon this world? They used their lives to proclaim to the world, to confirm to human beings that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, that the Lord Jesus is Christ, that He is God's incarnate flesh, that the work of redemption He did for all humanity allows humanity to live on—this fact is forever unchanging. Those who were martyred for spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to what extent did they perform their duty? Was it to the ultimate extent? How was the ultimate extent manifested? (They offered their lives.) That's right, they paid the price with their lives" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). God's words clearly explain the meaning of being martyred for God. The Lord Jesus' apostles and disciples were loyal to God unto death and gave up their precious lives to spread God's gospel. They used their lives to bear witness to the Lord Jesus being God and give testimony to God's work of the redemption of mankind. In the name of spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, Stephen was stoned to death and Peter was crucified upside down. Though their flesh perished, their deaths were meaningful and honorable. God commended how they used their own lives to bear witness for Him. Now members of the church were being faced with serious persecution and arrests and some brothers and sisters were being tortured and tormented upon being arrested, but they didn't give in to Satan and would rather go to jail than betray God. As for Wang Lan, she preferred to die rather than become a Judas. By contrast, in that situation I only ever considered my own safety, prioritized my own life above everything else, didn't have the slightest loyalty to my duty and didn't fulfill my responsibilities. Though I wasn't arrested and my life was preserved, I

hadn't borne witness at all and it was a humiliation to be alive. I felt incredibly guilty and was no longer willing to go on living such an ignoble existence. I also realized that God uses the great red dragon to do service and identify who is a true believer and who is a false believer, who bears witness and who does not and then separates each according to their kind. This is the wisdom of God's work. After realizing this, I became determined to do my duty well and stand firm in my witness for God. I prayed to God, saying, "Oh God, I have been too selfish and despicable. Because I was terrified of being arrested and tortured, I didn't protect the church's work and committed an eternal transgression. Going forward, no matter what situation I face, I will put my life on the line to maintain the church's interests. I will no longer live an ignoble existence. I am willing to put my life in Your hands and submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements."

A few months later, I was once again selected as a church leader. After doing my duty for just a few days, I received a letter from my upper leader saying that the CCP had obtained a picture of me from a closed-circuit television recording. The leader advised me to refrain from showing my face in public unless absolutely necessary. After receiving the letter, I felt a bit worried, but it didn't influence how I did my duty. If the work required me to go out, I would just disguise myself a bit and then go out to do my duty. Not soon after that, a number of brothers and sisters in my church were arrested and I needed to once again handle the aftermath. I realized that God was testing me. Despite feeling a bit worried and concerned, I thought about how in the past I had been selfish and despicable, passed off dangerous work to other people, left a permanent stain on my record with God and became Satan's laughingstock—faced with the current situation, I had to repent and stop living like I had in the past. I quietly prayed to God,

telling Him I was willing to rely on Him to handle the aftermath as quickly as possible. After that, I quickly made detailed arrangements with the group leaders to have the books of God's words transferred and the brothers and sisters soon successfully transferred all the books. Practicing in this way, I felt much more at ease and knew that this tranquility derived from God. Two months later, over ten brothers and sisters were arrested, including a former church leader. Faced with this situation, I didn't focus on maintaining my own safety as I had in the past, instead relying on God to handle the aftermath, protect my brothers and sisters and prevent the interests of God's house from being compromised. I consulted with my co-workers regarding how best to quickly notify brothers and sisters to hide and transfer the books. With the cooperation of the brothers and sisters, the books were all successfully transferred. When I heard the good news, I felt so happy and gave thanks to God for His guidance! I thought back on how, in the past, I had protected my own interests at every point, shirked away from my duty and was revealed as a false leader. This time, I finally wasn't constrained by my fear of death and was able to practice the truth and fulfill my responsibilities. It was all due to God's words that I was able to make this transformation.

36. How I Resolved Repression

By Gu Nian, China

In the past, I worked on a single item of work in the church, and the workload was not heavy and it was relatively easy, so I felt that doing duty this way was quite good. Later, I was elected as a gospel supervisor. I saw that the sister I worked with had many tasks to follow up on every day. She had to give timely fellowship to resolve the problems or the states and difficulties of the brothers and sisters when they were discovered, cultivate gospel workers, give regular summaries of the work, and so on. Her daily schedule was completely full. Just watching her made me feel mentally exhausted. “Is this going to be the state of my duty in the future? With so many detailed tasks, won’t my mind have to keep running every day? Moreover, when problems arise, I need to seek the truth to resolve them promptly. But my life entry is shallow, and I lack the truth regarding preaching the gospel. To take on this duty, I don’t know how much suffering my flesh will have to endure!” I felt a lot of pressure, and had little enthusiasm to actively cooperate with the upcoming work.

One night after finishing work, I felt empty inside and inexplicably irritable. Thinking about the difficulties and problems I would face in the upcoming work, I felt quite repressed and heavy-hearted. I realized my state was not right, so I prayed to God, “Oh God, my heart cannot settle down, I feel repression and irritation, and my state is not normal. Oh God, I pray that You lead me to come out of this state. Amen!” After praying, I opened the book of God’s words and read these words of God: **“If people constantly seek physical comfort and happiness, if they constantly pursue physical happiness and comfort, and don’t wish to suffer, then even a little bit of physical suffering, suffering a bit more than others,**

or feeling a bit more overworked than usual, would make them feel repressed. This is one of the causes of repression. If people do not consider a small amount of physical suffering a big deal, and they do not pursue physical comfort, but instead pursue the truth and seek to fulfill their duties in order to satisfy God, then they often will not feel physical suffering. Even if they occasionally feel a bit busy, tired, or worn out, after they go to sleep they will wake up feeling better, and then they will continue with their work. Their focus will be on their duties and their work; they won't consider a bit of physical fatigue a significant issue. However, when a problem arises in people's thinking and they constantly pursue physical comfort, any time that their physical bodies are slightly wronged or cannot find satisfaction, certain negative emotions will arise within them. So, why will this kind of person, who always wants to do as they please and to indulge their flesh and enjoy life, often find themselves trapped in this negative emotion of repression whenever they are unsatisfied? (It is because they pursue comfort and physical enjoyment.) **That is true for some people**" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (5)). **"In society, who are the people who do not attend to their proper work? They are idlers, fools, slackers, hooligans, ruffians, and loafers—people like that. They do not wish to learn any new skills or abilities, and they do not want to pursue serious careers or to find a job so that they can get by. They are the idlers and loafers of society. They infiltrate the church, and then they want to get something for nothing, and to obtain their share of blessings. They are opportunists. These opportunists are never willing to do their duties. If things do not go their way, even slightly, they feel repressed. They always wish to live freely, they do not want to perform any kind of work, and yet they still want to eat good food and wear nice**

clothing, and eat whatever they wish and sleep whenever they want. They think that when a day like this comes, it will surely be wonderful. They do not want to endure even a little bit of hardship and they wish for a life of indulgence. These people even find living exhausting; they are bound by negative emotions. They often feel tired and confused because they cannot do as they please. They do not want to attend to their proper work or to handle their proper affairs. They do not want to stick to a job and do it constantly from start to finish, treating it as their own profession and duty, as their obligation and responsibility; they do not want to finish it and achieve results, or do it to the best standard possible. They have never thought in that way. They just want to act in a perfunctory manner and to use their duty as a means to make a living. When they face a little pressure or some form of control, or when they are held to a slightly higher standard, or made to shoulder a bit of responsibility, they feel uncomfortable and repressed. These negative emotions arise within them, living feels exhausting to them, and they are miserable” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (5)). Pondering God’s words made me feel deeply upset and distressed. I saw that in God’s eyes, those who always seek comfort in their duty and fall into a state of repression when they suffer a little are people who do not attend to their proper work and opportunists who have infiltrated God’s house. Reflecting on my state and what I had revealed during this period, I realized that I was exactly the kind of person God exposed. I hadn’t officially taken on a task yet; I just saw the sister whom I worked with had many tasks to handle. She needed to put in effort, think hard, and rack her brains every day, and she also had to solve brothers and sisters’ states and problems through fellowship on the truth. I felt troubled because it all seemed so busy and exhausting. When I thought about how I

would have to take responsibility for these detailed tasks myself, I felt repressed and heavy-hearted, and didn't want to shoulder this burden. Yet I knew that spreading the gospel of God's kingdom is God's urgent intention, and those with conscience and reason who pursue the truth all consider God's intention, actually endure suffering and pay a price, and contribute their part to it. Now that I had accepted this duty, I had to consider how to take on this work as quickly as possible, such as cultivating people, resolving their states and difficulties, correcting problems and deviations in the work, and so on. These were tasks I hadn't encountered before, so I had to come to understand and familiarize myself with them little by little. But I didn't have those positive practices, and I worried all day that my flesh would suffer more, making me fall into a state of repression. I really wasn't attending to my proper work! These thoughts made me feel very guilty, so I came before God to pray, asking God to give me the sense of burden and the determination to endure suffering so that I could take on this work.

At first, I was quite active, familiarizing myself with various principles and equipping myself with the truth of preaching the gospel to resolve problems. Although it was challenging, by praying and relying on God, I was able to make some gains, and each day felt quite fulfilling. But after a while, I found that the detailed tasks were more than I had anticipated. When it came time to summarize the work, I saw there were so many problems that needed to be resolved, and I was overwhelmed. For example, the gospel workers didn't grasp the principles of their duties, they didn't know how to answer questions raised by the potential gospel recipients, some people had poor states, and so on. Resolving all these issues through fellowship one by one would require so much mental effort. Moreover, I had almost no experience, and finding the relevant principles to resolve these issues and figuring out how to answer the questions of the potential

gospel recipients effectively took so much mental effort! I felt immense pressure, and as I stared blankly at the computer, I couldn't help but think, "Every problem that comes up in the future will require thorough consideration and a cost to resolve. This duty is too difficult for me. I just want to be a minor follower. Couldn't I just focus on preaching the gospel and take on a simpler duty?" During that time, every morning when I opened my eyes, I felt overwhelmed with much work to handle, and even in my dreams, I was fellowshiping to resolve problems. Gradually, I felt more and more exhausted in my duty, my heart was particularly weary, and the repressive negative emotions became more severe. Every day, I hoped for fewer tasks and fewer problems so that I wouldn't be so tired. I spent several whole days in a row in a daze, just forcing myself to do my duty. My heart had little sense of burden, and I kept postponing the problems that needed resolving. When checking the work, I couldn't identify any issues; my brain felt like a block of wood, and my work efficiency was extremely low. Even prayer and eating and drinking God's words brought no enlightenment or light, and my spirit felt really dark. The brothers and sisters also noticed something was wrong with my state and asked me, "What's going on with your state these days? You're constantly drowsy and not very active during fellowship in gatherings." Hearing them say this, I felt even more distressed, and I wondered how I had ended up like this. Had I lost the work of the Holy Spirit? Had God set me aside and ignored me? Later, through seeking, I finally began to gain some understanding of my state.

I read these words of God: **"Having negative emotions proves that there is a problem, and when there is a problem, you should resolve it. There is always a way and a path to resolve problems that ought to be resolved—they are not unresolvable. It just depends on whether you**

can face up to the problem and whether you want to resolve it or not. If you do, then there is no problem so difficult that it cannot be resolved. You come before God and seek the truth in His words, and you can resolve every difficulty. However, not only can your dejection, depression, despondency and repression not help you to resolve your problems but, on the contrary, they can cause your problems to become ever more serious and to get worse and worse. Do you believe this? (Yes.)” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)).

“Finally, there is something I would like to tell you: Do not let a minor feeling or a simple, insignificant emotion tangle you up for the rest of your life so that it affects your attainment of salvation and destroys your hope for salvation, understand? (Yes.) This emotion of yours is not only negative, to be more accurate, it is actually in opposition to God and the truth. You might think that this is an emotion within normal humanity, but in God’s eyes, this is not just a simple matter of emotion, but a method of opposition to God. It is a method marked by negative emotions that people use to resist God, God’s words and the truth. Therefore, I hope that, assuming you want to pursue the truth, you will examine yourself thoroughly to see whether you are holding onto these negative emotions and stubbornly, foolishly resisting God and competing with Him. If you have discovered the answer through examination, if you have come to a realization and arrived at a clear awareness, then I ask you to first let go of these emotions. Do not cherish them or hold onto them, for they will destroy you, they will destroy your destination, and they will destroy the opportunity and hope you have in pursuing the truth and attaining salvation” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). God spoke very clearly. Negative emotions may seem like a minor issue, but they greatly affect a

person's pursuit of the truth and their fulfillment of duty. I used to think that everyone experiences negative emotions, that these are merely the revelations of thoughts and ideas in certain environments, and that this wasn't a big problem. So when I saw that God exposed negative emotions could lead a person to resist the truth and God, and could ruin their opportunity for salvation, I didn't have much genuine experience or understanding in my heart. Reflecting on what I had revealed during this period, I began to feel moved. When I saw the large amount of work and how numerous the projects were, I thought that fulfilling this duty would bring suffering and exhaustion upon my flesh, and I felt repressed and heavy-hearted, unable to feel liberated. When I actually followed up on this duty, I found there were many specific tasks to handle, and many problems that needed to be resolved through fellowship about the truth. But I lacked experience in this work, and I thought that in order to handle each task well, my flesh would have to suffer. This made me feel very distressed, with negative emotions constantly surfacing. Every day I was just forcing myself to do my duty, and I had no real sense of burden in my heart. I cared for the flesh, wallowed in repressive emotions, and was weak and passive in my duty. This essentially amounted to me venting my dissatisfaction and being disobedient to the environment arranged by God. This was resisting the truth and God, and standing in opposition to God. God scrutinizes the depths of people's hearts and my attitude toward my duty had made God loathe me. I had lost the work of the Holy Spirit in my duty. This was God's righteous disposition befalling me. This realization terrified me, and I knew I had to resolve my negative emotions as soon as possible.

Later, I read these words of God: **“What is your purpose, really, if you do not accept the truth—much less practice the truth—and simply muddle along in the house of God? Do you wish to make God's house**

your retirement home, or an almshouse? If so, you are mistaken—God’s house does not take care of freeloaders, of wastrels. Anyone of poor humanity, who does not perform their duty gladly, who is unfit to perform a duty, must all be cleared out; all disbelievers who do not accept the truth at all must be eliminated. Some people understand the truth but cannot put it into practice in performing their duties. When they see a problem, they do not solve it, and even though they know it is their responsibility, they do not give it their all. If you do not even carry out responsibilities that you are capable of, then what value or effect could performing your duty possibly have? Is it meaningful to believe in God in this way? Someone who understands the truth but cannot practice it, who cannot bear the hardships they ought to—such a person is unfit to perform a duty. Some people who perform a duty really do so just to be fed. They are beggars. They think that if they do a few tasks in God’s house, their room and board will be taken care of, that they will be provided for without needing to get a job. Is there such a thing as a bargain like that? God’s house does not provide for loafers. If anyone who does not practice the truth in the least, and who is consistently perfunctory in performing their duty, says they believe in God, will God acknowledge them? All such people are disbelievers and, as God sees them, evildoers” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One’s Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason).

“Today, you do not believe the words I say, and you pay no attention to them; when the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? Today, although the next step of God’s work

has yet to begin, there is nothing additional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your spirit? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless!"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). While mulling over God's words, I felt deeply judged. God loathes those who constantly seek fleshly comfort and enjoyment. Such people do not endure suffering or pay a price in their duty, and it is impossible for them to fulfill their responsibility or genuinely expend themselves for God. I had always pursued a life of fleshly comfort, I lived according to the satanic poisons of "Life is short, so enjoy it while you can," "Drink today's wine today, and worry about tomorrow, tomorrow," and "Treat yourself well, for life is short." I believed that life in this world was full of troubles and sorrows, and that one shouldn't make things harder on oneself, but should learn to enjoy life and treat themselves well. After believing in God, I knew that pursuing truth and doing one's duty is the right path in life, and that to gain the truth, one must endure suffering and pay a price. But when I was chosen as a supervisor and needed to take on more responsibilities, the thought of

having to suffer more to do the work well, and not being able to live a comfortable and easy life, made me feel repressed and heavy-hearted. Seeing the increased workload, I became dissatisfied, resistant, and full of complaints, and I even delayed solving problems within my capability. I saw that I was exactly the kind of person God exposed: someone unwilling to do their duties, a freeloader, and a useless person who loves ease and hates work. I thought about how many gospel-preaching brothers and sisters endured the abuse and humiliation from religious people, as well as the persecution and arrest by the great red dragon, and even faced the risk of losing their lives. Some of them devoted effort to equipping themselves with the truth to resolve the issues of potential gospel recipients, repeatedly fellowshipping to address the notions of religious people. No matter how difficult it was, they did not retreat or give up, willing to consider God's intentions and preach the gospel to more people. This is what people who truly have humanity should do. Then looking at myself, my attitude toward my duty was particularly irreverent and slack, as if being made a supervisor was intentionally trying to make things difficult for me, and I just wanted to be free from suffering or toil and freeload in God's house and muddle along the days. A person like me with such humanity did not deserve to do a duty. I was truly selfish and despicable! In fact, God gave each person a burden according to their actual stature, using their duty to make up for their shortcomings and help them gain the truth. Thinking back to when I first began this duty, I faced difficulties and problems in the work, and by praying and relying on God to seek the truth principles, I made some gains. Later, when gospel workers had issues with their states or work, through fellowshipping with them to resolve these problems, I also made some progress, which was something that could not be gained in a comfortable environment. But under the influence of Satan's poisons, I pursued

worthless and base things, always thinking of avoiding my duty to protect my fleshly interests, living in negative emotions and resisting God. I was truly rebellious and unable to distinguish right from wrong! If I continued to live for the flesh, I would certainly ruin my chance to gain the truth through doing my duty. Realizing this, I felt deep guilt and self-reproach, and I prayed to God with tears, “God, I was wrong. My attitude toward my duty has made You feel disgusted and disappointed. I have failed Your intention. God, I no longer want to be rebellious against You, and I am willing to rebel against my flesh and take on this responsibility.”

Later, I read these words of God: **“Those who truly believe in God are all individuals who attend to their proper work, they are all willing to perform their duties, capable of shouldering a piece of work and doing it well according to their caliber and the regulations of God’s house. Of course, it may be challenging to adapt to this life at first. You may feel physically and mentally exhausted. However, if you truly have the resolve to cooperate and the willingness to become a normal and good person, and to achieve salvation, then you must pay a bit of a price and allow God to discipline you. When you have the urge to be willful, you must rebel against it and let go of it, gradually reducing your willfulness and selfish desires. You must seek God’s help in crucial matters, at crucial times, and in crucial tasks. If you do have resolve, then you should ask God to chasten and discipline you, and to enlighten you so that you may understand the truth, that way you will get better results. If you genuinely have resolve, and you pray to God in His presence and supplicate to Him, God will act. He will change your state and your thoughts. If the Holy Spirit does a little work, moving you a little, and enlightening you a little, your heart will change, and your state will be transformed. ... If you can undergo such a transformation,**

God's house will welcome you to stay, to fulfill your duty, to accomplish your mission, and to thoroughly finish the work you have at hand. Of course, people who have these negative emotions can only be helped with a loving heart. If a person consistently refuses to accept the truth and remains unrepentant despite repeated admonitions, we should bid farewell to them. But if someone is really willing to change, to turn themselves around, to reverse their course, we warmly welcome them to stay. As long as they are genuinely willing to stay and to change their previous approaches and ways of living, and they are able to gradually undergo a transformation while performing their duty, and they become better at their duty the longer they perform it, then we welcome such people to stay and hope that they will continue to improve. We also express a great wish for them: We wish that they may emerge from their negative emotions, that they may no longer be entangled by them or enveloped by their shadow, and that they may instead attend to their proper work and walk the right path, acting and living out what normal people ought to according to God's requirements, and steadily fulfilling their duties in God's house according to His requirements, no longer drifting through life. We wish them promising futures, and that they will no longer do whatever they please, or solely concern themselves with pleasure-seeking and physical enjoyment, but instead think more about matters related to performing their duties, to the path they walk in life, and to living out normal humanity. We wholeheartedly wish that they may live happily, freely, and liberated in the house of God, experiencing daily peace and joy, and feeling warmth and enjoyment in their lives here. Is this not the greatest wish? (Yes.)" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (5)). Seeing God's efforts to retain and His wish for those who were

trapped in a state of repression, I felt warm and deeply touched and encouraged. God hopes that I can comport myself according to His requirements, live out normal humanity, attend to my proper work, and fulfill my duty according to truth principles. I also realized that to be a person with humanity and walk the right path in life, one must have the resolve to pursue positive things, consciously rebel against the flesh when facing difficulties and problems in doing their duty, and actually pay a price to resolve issues, thereby bearing the responsibilities of an adult. Additionally, before doing their duty each day, one should pray to God with a sincere heart and accept His scrutiny. When I find myself wanting to show consideration to the flesh and neglect my duty, I should ask God to rebuke and discipline me and strive to do my duty with all my heart and strength. Only by living this way will I possess human likeness. After understanding these things, I wanted to practice according to God's words and enter into them. From then on, for every task I was involved in, I entrusted it to and relied on God. And I actually paid the price by researching materials, praying, and seeking, pondering how to fellowship to achieve good results. When encountering things I didn't understand or couldn't handle, I communicated with my brothers and sisters. The problems that arose in my duty were gradually being resolved. Although the workload in my duty was the same as before, I no longer felt repressed, but rather found it worthwhile to invest effort and pay a price to do my duty well. I also experienced a sense of joy and fulfillment in my heart, and accumulated some real skills in my work. I feel that living according to God's words is truly great, and that I am living a valuable and dignified life!

37. Does the View “One Should Be Given Credit for Hard Work, If Not for Merit” Conform to the Truth?

By Enyu, China

In early August of 2022, we finished one of our gatherings and Sister Wang Jing said, “Zhang Min is isolated for reflection at home.” When I heard this, I asked, “What’s going on?” Wang Jing said, “Whenever brothers and sisters pointed out problems that emerged in her duty, Zhang Min consistently refused to accept this, and even reasoned and defended herself. She made a big scene, crying and causing a racket, even taking out her frustration on her duty. This led to the work being unable to proceed normally and caused a disruption and disturbance to church life. If she doesn’t reflect and try to know herself and still tries to defend herself, she may be cleared out.” But when I heard this, I was very surprised. I thought that Zhang Min had always forsaken and expended herself during her many years believing in God, and that when watering newcomers, she was loving and amiable. No matter how late it was, whenever a newcomer had a problem, she would do everything in her power to fellowship with them and resolve it, and she wouldn’t drop her duty even when a family matter came up. Even though she didn’t accept the truth now, it could just be that she didn’t recognize it yet. If she gradually tried to ponder and reflect and came to recognize this, wouldn’t that be alright? She didn’t deserve to be cleared out. If someone like her was cleared out, then, considering that my forsaking and expending of myself was no match for hers, would I not also be eliminated in the end? During that time, whenever I thought of this, my state became quite negative, and I lacked energy when doing my duty.

Later on, at one gathering, our church leader Wang Yu came to check the materials for Zhang Min's clearing out, and I spoke up about my notions and my confusion, saying, "Zhang Min abandoned her family and gave up her career in performing her duty for many years; she deserves credit for hard work, if not for merit. Why is she being cleared out? If she can't attain salvation by doing her duty like this, then since I don't suffer as much hardship and pay as much of a price as her, should I not be eliminated as well?" Seeing that I had developed notions, Wang Yu patiently fellowshiped with me, saying, "What you are seeing is how Zhang Min appears to do things on the surface; you haven't seen what her attitude toward the truth has been all along. According to the brothers and sisters' evaluation, when matters befell Zhang Min, she never accepted anything from God and always read too much into people and things. Brothers and sisters fellowshiped with her and helped her many times, but she didn't accept the truth in the slightest, reasoning and defending herself, and even taking out her frustration on her duty." And the leader gave an example, saying, "There was one time when her supervisor pointed out one of Zhang Min's problems with watering newcomers. Zhang Min didn't accept it and thought that the supervisor was deliberately targeting her. She lost her temper and said, 'I can't do this duty anymore; find someone else to do it!' Then she walked out, crying as she went." The leader said that these had been Zhang Min's manifestations all along, and that every time something involved her pride and status, she would cause a big scene, and no one could hold her back. Even her supervisor was constrained by her. These behaviors of hers seriously disturbed the church life and affected the watering work. Although Zhang Min had been doing her duty during these years of believing in God, she did not pursue the truth at all, and when matters befell her, she never accepted them from God, nor did she self-

reflect and learn new lessons, which meant she was a disbeliever. Next, Wang Yu read a passage of God's words: **"The standard by which humans judge other humans is based on their behavior; those whose conduct is good are righteous, while those whose conduct is abominable are evil. The standard by which God judges humans is based on whether their essence submits to Him or not; one who submits to God is a righteous person, while one who does not is an enemy and an evil person, regardless of whether this person's behavior is good or bad and regardless of whether their speech is correct or incorrect"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). Then she fellowshiped and said, "People judge others based on their exteriors. If someone's behavior appears to be good, then they're a good person, and if it appears to be bad, then they're an evil person. God looks at people based on their nature essence and their attitude toward the truth. God looks at whether people can submit to Him and to the truth, not at how much they appear to forsake, suffer, and work on the surface." Through this fellowship, I reflected that the reason I felt sorry for Zhang Min when she was cleared out was that I only saw her exteriors. I saw that she was able to abandon her family, give up her career, endure suffering, and pay a price, and that when newcomers encountered problems, she didn't mind taking time to fellowship with them, and so I believed that she was someone who pursued the truth. However, I didn't look at whether she was able to accept or submit to the truth when matters befell her or what the results achieved from her duty were like. I thought that God's house's requirements of her were too harsh, and that she shouldn't have been cleared out. It turned out that I couldn't see through people or things, that I was too ignorant.

Later on, when I gathered in a small group, I found that in regard to Zhang Min's clearing out, some brothers and sisters also had the view that

“One should be given credit for hard work, if not for merit.” Targeting this problem, I found several passages of God’s words to read. Almighty God says: “Paul did not pursue the truth. He only believed in God because he sought a future and destination for his flesh. He only sought to gain rewards and a crown. God spoke so many words, disciplined, enlightened and illuminated him so much, and yet he did not submit to God or accept the truth. He always rebelled against and resisted God, and in the end, he became an antichrist and was condemned and punished. Paul serves as an example of what not to do. ... According to man’s notions and imaginings, people think, ‘God shouldn’t have treated Paul that way. Paul had done so much and suffered so much. Plus, he was loyal and devoted to God. Why would God treat him like that?’ Is it right for people to say this? Is it in line with the truth? In what way was Paul so loyal or devoted to God? Are they not twisting the facts? Paul was loyal and devoted to obtaining blessings for himself. Is that loyalty and devotion to God? When people do not understand the truth, cannot see the essence of a problem clearly, and speak blindly based on their feelings, are they not rebelling against God and resisting Him? No wonder everyone adores Paul! Those who are of Satan always adore Satan, and even speak for Satan based on their feelings. This means that although people may seem to have separated from Satan, they remain connected. In fact, when people speak for Satan, they are also speaking for themselves. People sympathize with Paul because they are like him, and on the same path as him. According to man’s common sense, God should not have treated Paul that way, but what He did was the exact opposite of man’s common sense. This is God’s righteous disposition, and it is the truth. If a person speaks in accordance with man’s common sense, they may say, ‘Even if Paul did not achieve

much, he still endured a lot of hardship, and if not hardship, then he endured fatigue. He should have been spared just on account of the number of years he suffered. Even if he was just a laborer it would be okay. He shouldn't have been punished or sent to hell.' This is the common sense and feelings of man—it is not the truth. What is the loveliest aspect of God? That He does not have man's common sense. Everything He does is in accordance with the truth and His essence. He reveals a righteous disposition. God has no regard for your subjective wishes, nor for the objective facts of what you have done. God determines and defines what kind of person you are based on what you do, what you reveal, and the path you walk, and then assumes the most appropriate attitude toward you. This is how Paul's outcome came about. Looking at the matter of Paul, it seems as if God was devoid of love. Peter and Paul were both created beings, but while God approved of and blessed Peter, He exposed, dissected, judged, and condemned Paul. You cannot see God's love in the way He decided Paul's outcome. So, based on what happened to Paul, could you say that God does not love? No, you cannot, because God disciplined him many times, illuminated him, giving him many chances to repent, but Paul stubbornly refused and walked the path of resistance to God. So in the end, God condemned and punished him” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Understanding the Truth Can One Know God's Deeds). “Some people will end up saying, ‘I've done so much work for You, and though I may not have made any celebrated achievements, still I have been diligent in my efforts. Can't You just let me into heaven to eat the fruit of life?’ You must know what kind of people I desire; those who are impure are not permitted to enter into the kingdom, those who are impure are not permitted to besmirch the holy ground. Though you

may have done much work, and worked for many years, in the end if you are still deplorably filthy, then it will be intolerable to the law of Heaven that you wish to enter My kingdom! From the foundation of the world until today, never have I offered easy access to My kingdom to those who curry favor with Me. This is a heavenly rule, and no one can break it! You must seek life. Today, those who will be made perfect are the same kind as Peter: They are those who seek changes in their own disposition, and who are willing to bear testimony to God and fulfill their duty as a created being. Only people such as this will be made perfect. If you only look to rewards, and do not seek to change your own life disposition, then all your efforts will be in vain—this is an **unalterable truth!**” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). **“I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). From God’s words, I saw that God’s disposition is righteous and holy. What a person’s outcome is and whether or not they are saved does not depend on how much work they appear to do or how much they appear to forsake and expend themselves. What is important is whether or not this person is someone who pursues the truth, and whether or not they have changed their life disposition. If they only focus on working hard and do not pursue changing their life disposition, then they will ultimately be unable to stand firm and have to be eliminated sooner or later. It’s just like Paul during the Age of Grace. He worked for many years, endured much suffering, gained quite a few people while preaching the

gospel, and established a lot of churches, but his expending of himself was all in order to gain rewards and a crown, and his intention was to make transactions with God. What's more, Paul's nature was extremely arrogant and conceited, and he had no regard for anyone, even testifying that he lived as Christ did. Paul walked the antichrist's path of resisting God, and in the end, he offended God's disposition and met God's punishment. Realizing this, I came to see Zhang Min's issue more clearly. In the past, I believed that Zhang Min worked hard and abandoned her family and gave up on her career to do her duty, and that she should be credited for her hard work if not for her merit, or at least for how weary she was, and that she should be given another chance to repent. Now, looking at her consistent manifestations, I saw that she did not accept the truth in the slightest and was averse to the truth, and that each time a matter befell her, as long as it touched upon her pride and status, she would make a big scene of it. Not only did she not accept the brothers and sisters' pointers and help, she would be unreasonably troublesome, curse and talk nonsense, and take out her frustration on her duty. She looked nothing like a person who believed in God. When brothers and sisters exposed and pointed out her problems, she thought that they were purposely embarrassing her, and sometimes she would feel wronged and thus ignore the leader, which led to the leader being unable to implement work. By being in the church, she brought disturbances to the brothers and sisters and the work, and it could be said that the cons outweighed the pros. The church clearing her out completely revealed God's righteousness. However, I hadn't judged this issue based on the truth principles. When I heard that she was cleared out, I misunderstood God and came to Zhang Min's defense. I saw that I didn't have the truth and didn't know how to discern people, and that I could resist God at any time.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"People who are unreasonable and willfully troublesome generally might not commit any significant treacherous or evil deeds, but the moment their interests, reputation, or dignity get involved, they immediately explode in anger, throw tantrums, act in an unruly manner, and even threaten suicide. Tell Me, if such an absurd and unreasonably crude person emerges in a family, wouldn't the whole family suffer? The household would then be engulfed in turmoil, filled with cries and howls, making it unbearable to live. Some churches have such people; although it might not be apparent when everything is normal, you never know when they might have an outbreak and reveal themselves. The primary manifestations of such people include throwing tantrums, spouting preposterous arguments, and swearing in public, among others. Even if these behaviors occur only once a month or every half-year, they cause great distress and difficulty, bringing varying degrees of disturbance to the church life of most people. If it is indeed confirmed that someone falls within this category, they should be handled promptly and cleared out from the church. Some might say, 'These people don't do any evil. They can't be considered evil people; we should be tolerant and patient with them.' Tell Me, would it be okay to not handle such people? (No, it would not be okay.) Why not? (Because their actions cause significant trouble and vexation to most people, and also cause disturbances to church life.) Based on this outcome, it's clear that those who disturb church life, even if they are not evil people or antichrists, should not remain in the church. That's because such people do not love the truth but are averse to it, and no matter how many years they believe in God or how many sermons they hear, they will not accept the truth. Once they do something bad and are pruned, they throw tantrums and spout**

nonsense. Even when someone fellowships the truth to them, they do not accept it. Nobody can reason with them. Even when I fellowship the truth to them, they may remain silent outwardly but do not accept it inwardly. When faced with actual situations, they still act as they always have. They don't listen to My words, so your advice would be even less accepted by them. Although these people may not commit acts of major evil, they do not accept the truth one bit. Looking at their nature essence, not only do they lack conscience and reason, but they are also unreasonable, willfully troublesome, and impervious to reason. Can such people achieve God's salvation? Absolutely not! Those who do not accept the truth at all are disbelievers, they are servants of Satan. When things do not go their way, they throw tantrums, persistently spout preposterous arguments, and do not listen to the truth no matter how it's fellowshipped. Such people are unreasonable and willfully troublesome, purely devils and evil spirits; they are worse than beasts! They are mental cases with unsound reason, and are never capable of true repentance. The longer they stay in the church, the more notions they have about God, the more unreasonable demands they make on God's house, and the greater the disturbance and harm they cause to church life. This affects the life entry of God's chosen people and the normal progress of church work. Their harm to the work of the church is no less than that of evil people; they should be cleared out from the church early on. Some people say, 'Aren't they just being a bit unruly? They don't reach the point of being evil, so wouldn't it be better to treat them with love? If we keep them, maybe they can change and be saved.' I tell you, it's impossible! There's no 'maybe' about it—these people absolutely cannot be saved. It's because they cannot understand the truth, much less accept it; they lack

conscience and reason, their thought processes are abnormal, and they even lack the most basic common sense required for being human. They are people with unsound reason. God absolutely does not save such people” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (26)). From God’s words, I saw that although people who are unreasonably troublesome don’t do anything greatly evil, whenever something involves their own interests, they make a big scene and engage in false reasoning. No matter how one fellowships on the truth with them, they don’t accept it, and they seriously disturb church life. Additionally, such people who are unreasonably troublesome do not possess the conscience and reason of normal humanity, and no matter how many years they’ve believed in God, they can’t understand a shred of the truth. God does not save such people. Zhang Min was this sort of person. As long as something touched upon her interests, she would stir up trouble and make a huge scene, turning a perfectly fine gathering into a chaotic mess. It was impossible for others to calm down and fellowship on God’s words. These kinds of people should be handled in a timely manner to safeguard church life. In fact, people with a bit of conscience and reason are all aware that being cleared out is not an accident, and they will calm their hearts to properly self-reflect and learn lessons from it. Even though they don’t understand at the time, at least they won’t spread their notions and give vent to their emotions; people like this have a bit of a God-fearing heart and still have a chance to repent. But when this matter befell Zhang Min, she didn’t seek the truth or self-reflect, and instead was full of notions and misunderstandings toward God, judging Him for being unrighteous, and even asking why He gave others a chance but not her. After being cleared out, she still did not reflect on herself, reasoning and clamoring against God while giving vent to her discontent and indignance, as well as spreading her

notions and misleading people. Seeing that she didn't have the slightest attitude of repentance, her being cleared out was entirely God's righteousness!

From this experience, I came to understand how important it is to discern people's essence based on God's words. The saying "One should be given credit for hard work, if not for merit" was a fallacy and not in keeping with the truth. Those who don't know how to discern others based on God's words will be misled and even regard disbelievers and evil people as their brothers and sisters and come to their defense. Only viewing people and things according to God's words is accurate. I no longer felt sorry for Zhang Min for being cleared out, and I was also more alert with myself to ensure that when I was pruned or judged and chastised, I would be able to seek the truth, reflect on myself, and believe that whatever God does is righteous. That I am able to reap some gains is a result achieved by God's words.

38. Why I Couldn't Calmly Accept My Duty

By Song Chuying, China

At the end of March 2023, the leaders asked me to supervise the church's cleansing work. I felt a lot of pressure when they told me this, and I thought, "I have a shallow understanding of the truth and lack discernment. If I can't do actual work, I might end up being dismissed before long. That would be so embarrassing! Being a team member carries less responsibility and there's a supervisor to review things, so the chances of making mistakes are smaller. If I become a supervisor, the workload will be greater, and as soon as I make a mistake, it could delay the work or, worse, lead to wrongful accusations and punishments. That would be a serious transgression! The performance of duty is meant to be a way to prepare good deeds, but if I transgress too much, then I'd be getting off lightly by being dismissed and embarrassed, and in worse cases, I might even be expelled from the church. Would I still have a good outcome and destination then?" With this in mind, I just gave excuses to decline the role by saying that my life entry was shallow, and that I wasn't up to this duty. The leader didn't say much but told me to continue seeking. In the days that followed, I felt weighed down every time I thought of the leader's words. It just so happened that during that time, I had a problem in assessing someone's behavior. I only looked at the severe consequences of her evil actions and labeled her as an evil person without examining her nature essence or consistent behavior. It was only later that I realized that although this person had committed some evil deeds, she wasn't an evil person. This incident made me feel even more heavy-hearted. This mistake of mine had nearly harmed someone and disrupted the cleansing work. My discernment was really lacking. If I became a supervisor and made mistakes again,

wouldn't I just end up transgressing more? I then thought of Sister Lin Fang, the supervisor who had just been dismissed because she didn't do actual work and failed to oversee and moderate the work. The two supervisors that had come before her had ended up being expelled from the church because they'd committed too many evil deeds. This made me feel even more strongly that being a supervisor was too risky, and that if I didn't do the job well, I would just end up being dismissed or eliminated before long. It felt safer to just be a team member. But directly refusing the duty wasn't appropriate either, so I felt conflicted. Over the next few days, I kept thinking about these things, feeling that I was under a lot of pressure, and my state was impacted. I prayed to God and sought guidance from Him.

During one of my devotionals, I read an experiential testimony article, where the protagonist kept making excuses and declining duties because he was thinking about his pride and interests, but later, he realized that duties come with God's sovereignty and arrangements, and God observes his attitude toward duties, and he needed to submit first. I also needed to enter into the truth of submission to God first. So, I looked up a relevant passage of God's word. I read that God's words say: **"When Noah did as God instructed, he did not know what God's intentions were. He did not know what God wanted to accomplish. God had only given him a command and instructed him to do something, and without much explanation, Noah went ahead and did it. He did not try to secretly figure out God's desires, nor did he resist God or show insincerity. He just went and did it accordingly with a pure and simple heart. Whatever God had him do, he did, and submitting and listening to God's word underpinned his belief in what he did. That was how straightforwardly and simply he dealt with what God entrusted. His essence—the essence of his actions was submission, not second-**

guessing, not resisting, and moreover, not thinking of his own personal interests or his gains and losses. Further, when God said He would destroy the world with a flood, Noah did not ask when or ask what would become of things, and he certainly did not ask God how He was going to destroy the world. He simply did as God instructed. However God wanted it to be made and made with what, he did exactly as God asked and also commenced action immediately. He acted according to God's instructions with an attitude of wanting to satisfy God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). From reading God's words, I realized that being able to submit in any situation is what God requires of people and that this is the reason that created beings should possess. I saw that Noah was pure-hearted in his approach to God's commission. He just obeyed and submitted. He didn't consider how many difficulties he might face in building the ark, or what responsibilities he might have to bear if it wasn't done well. He just wanted to be considerate of God's intentions, to build the ark as God required as quickly as possible, so that God's will could be carried out. But when a duty came upon me, my thoughts were so overwrought, and I kept thinking about my difficulties, my future, and my destination. I thought that being a supervisor was too risky and would make me liable to transgress, and that if I committed too many transgressions, I wouldn't have a good outcome. When I had these thoughts in mind, I found that I couldn't submit at all, and I kept wanting to make excuses to avoid this duty. Thinking about this, I felt really ashamed. I'd believed in God for so many years but still lacked basic submission. I truly had no truth realities at all. I couldn't go on like this. Although I had difficulties and concerns, I had to first submit and take on this duty.

Later, I read another passage of God's words and gained some understanding of my state. God says: **"Judging by the attitude of**

antichrists toward God, toward the environments and people, events, and things arranged by God, toward God's revealing and disciplining of them, and so on, do they have the slightest intention to seek the truth? Do they have the slightest intention to submit to God? Do they have the slightest faith that all of this is not accidental but is rather under God's sovereignty? Do they have this understanding and awareness? Obviously not. The root of their guardedness can be said to come from their doubts about God. The root of their suspicion of God can also be said to come from their doubts about God. The results produced by their scrutiny of God make them more suspicious of God, and at the same time more guarded against God. Judging by the various thoughts and viewpoints generated from antichrists' thinking, as well as the various approaches and behaviors produced under the domination of these thoughts and viewpoints, these people are quite simply unreasonable; they cannot understand the truth, they cannot develop genuine faith in God, they cannot thoroughly believe and acknowledge the existence of God, and they cannot believe and acknowledge that God is sovereign over all creation, that He is sovereign over everything. All of this is due to their wicked disposition essence" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Five: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part Two)). From God's words, I saw that antichrists don't believe in God's righteousness when things happen. Instead of seeking the truth to know God's disposition, they use human notions, imaginings, and satanic philosophies to analyze God's work and the situations He arranges. Therefore, they become guarded and misunderstand God. This is caused by the wicked nature of antichrists. Examining myself in light of God's words, I saw my state was the same. Seeing that the previous three supervisors had been dismissed and

eliminated, I didn't seek the truth, consider why they'd failed, or gain discernment and learn lessons from their failures. Instead, I became guarded, living by satanic philosophies like "Caution is the parent of safety," and "The bigger they are, the harder they fall." I felt that being a supervisor was too risky, and that if I brought about any wrongful accusations and punishments, this would be a major transgression and I wouldn't have a good outcome or destination. I thought I had to protect myself and avoid risks, so I kept making excuses to avoid this duty. Later, I pondered, "What are God's intentions in assigning me this duty? Supervising cleansing work does carry heavy responsibilities, but it would allow me to recognize various types of evil people, antichrists, and disbelievers, which would help me make swift progress in discerning people. Also, being a supervisor would involve handling many problems, and this would push me to seek related truth principles and equip myself with the truth, making it a great opportunity for training. But instead of seeking the truth in this matter, I've always been thinking that being a supervisor meant bearing greater responsibility and that I'd be revealed and eliminated more quickly, so I was full of suspicion and guardedness toward God. I've really wounded God's heart!"

I then thought of a passage of God's words: **"God is righteous and fair to everyone. God doesn't look at how you were before or at your current stature, He looks at whether you pursue the truth and whether you walk the path of pursuing the truth. ... God allows you to stumble, to fail, and to make mistakes. God will give you opportunities and time to understand the truth, practice the truth, gradually understand His intentions, do everything in accordance with His intentions, truly submit to God, and achieve the truth reality that God requires people to possess. However, who is the person that God loathes the most? It is**

the one who, despite knowing the truth in their heart, refuses to accept it, let alone put it into practice. Instead, they still live by Satan's philosophies, yet consider themselves to be pretty good and submissive to God while also seeking to mislead others and gain a position in God's house. God loathes this kind of person the most, they are antichrists. Although everyone has a corrupt disposition, these actions are of a different nature. It is no ordinary corrupt disposition nor a normal revelation of corruption; rather, you consciously and stubbornly resist God to the end. You know that God exists, you believe in God, yet you deliberately choose to resist Him. This is not having notions about God and a problem of misunderstanding; instead you deliberately resist God to the end. Can God save someone like this? God does not save you. You are an enemy of God, therefore you are a devil and a Satan. Can God still save devils and Satans?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ

of the Last Days. In Believing in God, What Is Most Important Is to Practice and Experience His Words). From God's words, I saw that God is fair to people. God doesn't eliminate people for momentary mistakes or failures, but reveals and eliminates people when they persistently reject the truth and stubbornly oppose Him. I thought about how my lack of understanding of the truth had led me to make mistakes in discerning people, yet no one had sought to hold me responsible or stopped me from doing this duty because of it. God was using my mistakes to equip me with the truth in relation to discerning evil people to make up for my deficiencies. I thought more about why Lin Fang failed. Recently, I'd heard her talk about her wrong intentions in her duty. When she saw poor work results, she shifted the work off onto her partnered sister, and didn't take responsibility herself. When the upper leadership fellowshiped and corrected her, she kept making excuses and trying to defend herself, and refused to reflect on and know herself

regarding these issues. Lin Fang was dismissed not because of her mistakes, but mainly because she refused to accept the truth and was irresponsible. There were also two other supervisors. One had an arrogant disposition, was autocratic and always wanted to hold all authority, and when others didn't listen to him, he would try to suppress and torment them. The other supervisor constantly pursued reputation and status, suppressing and excluding dissenting opinions. Both walked the path of an antichrist and were expelled for their many evil deeds. I saw that God is righteous and that He doesn't dismiss or clear out people simply for making mistakes in their duty, but based on people's attitude toward the truth and God, and the path they walk. From their consistent behavior, it was clear that their nature essence was averse to and hated the truth, and that they only pursued reputation and status and didn't protect the church's work at all, leading to God revealing and eliminating them. But I'd thought that those with status or great responsibility were more likely to be revealed and eliminated, while an ordinary brother or sister, with fewer tasks, would commit fewer transgressions because there were fewer things involved, and thus avoid being revealed and eliminated. But these were just my notions and imaginings. I was always guarding against God and avoiding my duty. Even if I committed no transgressions, if I didn't pursue the truth, my corrupt disposition wouldn't be cleansed or changed, and I wouldn't receive salvation, and ultimately, I would still have no good outcome. With this in mind, I became willing to accept this duty. God allows for deviations and issues in a person's duty, and so long as a person can seek the truth afterward, reflect on themselves, and promptly correct these deviations, God will continue to guide them. When I thought about it, I saw that I'd been doing cleansing work for quite some time, and that I'd come to understand some principles of discernment. The church work urgently

needed people to cooperate, so I had to consider God's intentions and do my best to cooperate, as this was the reason and submission I had to have. But my mind was filled only with thoughts of my own interests, outcome, and destination. I'd been so selfish and despicable!

Later on, I read more of God's words: **"In what way is treating the pursuit of blessings as an objective wrong? It flies completely in the face of the truth, and is not congruent with God's intention to save people. Since being blessed is not an appropriate objective for people to pursue, what is an appropriate objective? The pursuit of the truth, the pursuit of changes in disposition, and being able to submit to all of God's orchestrations and arrangements: these are the objectives that people should pursue. Say, for example, being pruned causes you to have notions and misunderstandings, and you become incapable of submission. Why can't you submit? Because you feel that your destination or your dream of being blessed has been challenged. You become negative and upset, and try to get out of doing your duty. What is the reason for this? There is a problem with your pursuit. So how should this be solved? It is imperative that you immediately abandon these mistaken ideas, and that you immediately seek the truth to solve the problem of your corrupt disposition. You should say to yourself, 'I must not quit, I must still do well the duty that a created being ought to, and put aside my desire to be blessed.' When you relinquish the desire to be blessed and you walk the path of pursuing the truth, a weight is lifted off your shoulders. And will you still be capable of negativity? Even though there are still times when you are negative, you don't let this constrain you, and in your heart, you keep praying and fighting, changing the objective of your pursuit from the pursuit of being blessed and having a destination, to the pursuit of the truth, and**

you think to yourself, ‘The pursuit of the truth is the duty of a created being. To understand certain truths today—there is no greater harvest, this is the greatest blessing of all. Even if God does not want me, and I do not have a good destination, and my hopes of being blessed are shattered, I shall still do my duty properly, I am obligated to. Whatever the reason, it will not impact my performance of my duty, it will not affect my accomplishment of God’s commission; this is the principle by which I conduct myself.’ And in this, have you not transcended the constraints of the flesh?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Only in the Practice of the Truth Is There Life Entry). **“There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he receives blessings or suffers misfortune. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. Receiving blessings refers to when someone is made perfect and enjoys God’s blessings after experiencing judgment. Suffering misfortune refers to when someone’s disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment; they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they receive blessings or suffer misfortune, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to receive blessings, and you should not refuse to act for fear of suffering misfortune. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man’s performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness. It is through the process of doing his duty that man is gradually changed, and it is through this process that he demonstrates his loyalty. As such, the more**

you are able to do your duty, the more truth you shall receive, and the more real your expression shall become. Those who merely go through the motions in doing their duty and do not seek the truth shall be eliminated in the end, for such people do not do their duty in the practice of truth, and do not practice truth in the performance of their duty. They are those who remain unchanged and will suffer misfortune. Not only are their expressions impure, but everything they express is evil” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). From God’s words, I saw that regardless of whether a person receives blessings or suffers misfortune, it is perfectly natural and justified for a created being to do their duty. Since people follow God, they should fulfill their responsibilities, as this is how to live a valuable and meaningful life. God’s intentions are for people to enter into the truth reality through their duty. In the course of one’s duty, various corrupt dispositions will be revealed, and many shortcomings will be exposed. Through this opportunity, one can seek the truth and reflect on oneself, and thereby be cleansed and transformed. Even though I was facing difficulties in training as a supervisor now, I could rely more on God, focus on seeking the truth, do my duty according to principles, carry out my responsibilities, and show my loyalty. If after a period of training, I ended up being reassigned due to inadequate caliber, I wouldn’t have any regrets.

Moving forward, as I did the duty of a supervisor, whether I faced difficulties or had deviations in my duty, I saw it as a good opportunity to gain the truth, fellowshiped on and summarized these things with my brothers and sisters, and sought relevant truth principles. Gradually, the truths I didn’t understand before became clearer, and I made some progress. I am no longer guarded against God, and I just want to practically learn

lessons in every situation God arranges. I thank God for allowing me to make real gains and obtain some actual insights.

39. Resolving Arrogance Isn't Easy

By Lucas, South Korea

In 2020, our church's gospel work wasn't producing good results, and so the gospel deacon was dismissed, and I was chosen to be the new gospel deacon. Hearing this news, I was both anxious and happy, thinking to myself, "Since the brothers and sisters chose me, it means I have potential. I've been spreading the gospel for several years now, but I haven't been a gospel deacon before. Now that I finally have the opportunity, I need to work hard and show everyone my abilities." In the following days, I worked with the brothers and sisters in spreading the gospel, continually summarizing and correcting deviations from previous work, and I often sought out others for fellowship on issues I didn't understand. After some time, the gospel work showed significant improvement. The leaders encouraged us to keep up the good work and the brothers and sisters praised me for being resourceful and having good caliber. My vanity was greatly satisfied. I thought to myself, "Given that I was the one who turned things around with the gospel work, it seems my caliber is indeed much better than that of the previous gospel deacon." I felt very self-satisfied, as if I had become the backbone of the church's gospel work, and that I was indispensable. Gradually, I became more and more arrogant, ignoring the brothers' and sisters' suggestions and making all decisions on my own. When discussing work, decisions were often approved by everyone, but got stuck when it came to me. I always thought my own ideas were correct, and insisted on dismissing their viewpoints and going with mine. Once, we were preaching to a pastor from a religious denomination, and when the previous gospel deacon learned of this, she warned me that this person had an arrogant disposition and had relatively distorted understanding, making it

difficult for him to accept the true way, and so she suggested that I preach to others first. But I refused to listen, thinking, “This pastor has believed in the Lord for many years and has many religious notions, so it’s normal if he can’t accept the truth right away. Besides, you’ve been dismissed, proving that you were less capable than me in this duty. Now I am the gospel deacon and I’ve got considerable preaching experience, I believe this time I will succeed!” Unexpectedly, after several days of fellowship, the pastor still had many notions. At this point, the leader and cooperating brothers and sisters suggested, “It would be better to stop and seek further, and preach to other potential gospel recipients first.” I was displeased upon hearing this, thinking, “Isn’t this questioning my work abilities? Won’t it make me seem inept if I go preach to others now?” I also disregarded the leader’s advice, thinking, “Although you’re a leader and have done your duty longer than I have, in terms of professional skills and practical experience, I am still better. Your suggestions might not be suitable either.” So I continued fellowshiping with the pastor. In the end, the pastor not only rejected the gospel, but also sealed off his own church and prevented believers from investigating the true way. I was stunned. I dared not argue back when I was exposed and pruned by the leader, and could only obediently admit that I had been too arrogant, and that I had obstructed and disrupted the gospel work. However, this setback did not wake me up, and I felt deep down that this had just been a minor failure, and did not reflect my work abilities, so I only behaved myself for a few days, and after that, I returned to my old ways, not cooperating with others in my duties. When others didn’t follow my suggestions in work discussions, I felt unhappy and often showed a bad attitude. Over time, everyone was impacted by me and lived in a repressed mood. The results of our duties also continued to decline. The leader repeatedly pruned me for my arrogant disposition, and

harshly dissected and exposed me, but after each time I was pruned, I could only control myself for a while, and over time, my old habits would return. Later, the leader saw that my disposition was too arrogant, that I acted arbitrarily in my duties, did not accept being pruned, and that I was causing obstructions to the church's work, so they dismissed me.

I was well aware that being dismissed was God's righteous disposition coming upon me and that I should accept and obey it, but I felt somewhat despondent. When I thought about how, over the past six months, despite the many prunings I had faced, my corrupt disposition hadn't changed much, I concluded that I was not a person who pursued the truth, and that my corrupt disposition might never be able to change. One day, while having a meal, I ran into two brothers. They learned that I had been dismissed and so they shared their own experiences to support and help me. They said that they had also been arrogant, self-righteous, and arbitrary in their duties before, and that it was only after being dismissed that they came before God to reflect on themselves and gain some understanding of the truth of their corruption. They deeply repented and detested themselves, and they no longer wanted to live according to their satanic disposition. After their experiences, they realized that without God's judgment, chastisement, chastening, and discipline, they would not have come to know themselves or repent to God. The brothers' candid fellowship deeply touched me, and I knew this was God encouraging and helping me through the brothers. I should no longer be negative. I had to reflect on myself and pursue dispositional change.

From then on, I consciously read more of God's words and reflected on my actions and conduct. I read two passages of God's words: **"Some people never seek the truth while performing their duties. They merely do as they please, acting according to their own imaginings, and are**

ever arbitrary and rash. They simply do not walk the path of practicing the truth. What does it mean to be ‘arbitrary and rash’? It means to act however you see fit when you encounter an issue, without any process of thinking or searching. Nothing anyone else says can touch your heart or change your mind. You can’t even accept it when the truth is fellowshiped to you, you stick to your own opinions, not listening when other people say anything right, believing yourself right, and clinging to your own ideas. Even if your thinking is correct, you should take other people’s opinions into consideration as well. And if you don’t at all, is this not being extremely self-righteous? It is not easy for people who are extremely self-righteous and willful to accept the truth. If you do something wrong and others criticize you, saying, ‘You’re not doing it according to the truth!’ you reply, ‘Even if I’m not, this is still how I’m going to do it,’ and then you find some reason to make them think this is right. If they reproach you, saying, ‘You acting like this is disruptive, and it will damage the work of the church,’ not only do you not listen, but you keep coming out with excuses: ‘I think this is the right way, so this is how I’m going to do it.’ What disposition is this? (Arrogance.) It is arrogance. An arrogant nature makes you willful. If you have an arrogant nature, you will behave arbitrarily and rashly, heedless of what anyone says” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). “I see many people who let it go to their head when they show some talent in their duty. When they show some abilities, they think they are very impressive, and then they live off these abilities and do not push themselves further. They do not listen to others no matter what they say, thinking that these small things they possess are the truth, and that they are supreme. What disposition is this? This is an arrogant disposition. They are far too lacking in reason. Can a

person perform their duty well when they have an arrogant disposition? Can they submit to God and follow God to the very end? This is even more difficult. ... Some people are always showing off. When others find it distasteful, they criticize them as being arrogant. But they do not accept it; they still think they are talented and skilled. What disposition is this? They are too arrogant and self-righteous. Are people who are this arrogant and self-righteous capable of thirsting for the truth? Can they pursue the truth? If they are never able to know themselves, and do not cast off their corrupt disposition, then can they perform their duty well? Certainly not” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Knowing One’s Disposition Is the Foundation of Changing It). After reading God’s words, I felt as though my heart was pricked. God’s words exposed my true state. I had been so arrogant and willful, carrying out my duties without seeking the truth, and doing things based on my own imaginings and preferences, doing whatever I pleased. Just because I had some experience from preaching the gospel for a long time and had gotten some results, I became self-satisfied and treated these as personal capital, thinking that I had the best caliber in the group and that my judgment was more accurate than others, so I acted arbitrarily according to my own will, and no matter what others said, I always had my own theoretical basis to refute them, as if I were the only one with any ideas, while others were just ignorant, thoughtless ordinary people. Where was my reason as a normal person? Thinking back to when I was preaching the gospel to that religious pastor, the leader and partnered brothers and sisters gave me suggestions, saying that this person was arrogant and had a distorted understanding, making it hard for him to accept the truth, and they suggested that I should preach to others first. But I felt that I had experience and could judge people accurately, so I just acted willfully. In the end, the facts proved that I lacked

discernment about people and did not follow principles in preaching the gospel, which severely affected the gospel work. But even in the face of such obvious failure, I still didn't properly reflect on myself, and I only took it as a momentary mistake. I had become so numb! Now, by reading God's words, I was beginning to see my problems more clearly. My failure lay in being too arrogant and self-righteous, and in having an inflated view of myself. If I had some reason and self-knowledge, and if I sought the truth, listened to the suggestions of brothers and sisters, and cooperated with everyone, I wouldn't have made these mistakes that disrupted and disturbed the gospel work. The more I thought about it, the more I hated myself. How could I have had so much self-confidence? I read that God's word says: **"Are people who are this arrogant and self-righteous capable of thirsting for the truth? Can they pursue the truth? If they are never able to know themselves, and do not cast off their corrupt disposition, then can they perform their duty well? Certainly not."** I began to understand that an arrogant person truly cannot do their duty well. Because I did not yearn for the truth in my heart, when encountering matters, it was impossible for me to actively seek the truth. Even though I could do some work for a time, without changing my satanic disposition, I could only ever rebel against God and resist God involuntarily. Although my understanding of myself was shallow, I was still very grateful. This was something I had not realized before being dismissed, and I sincerely thanked God for His enlightenment, guidance, chastening, and discipline.

In the days that followed, I began to focus on collaborating with brothers and sisters in my duty and on entering into principles more. But unexpectedly, over time, I began to relapse into my old problems. In particular, when I was certain that I was right, and when brothers and sisters did not accept my suggestions, I would explode in hotheadedness and

couldn't resist arguing with them, I always wanted to convince everyone to do things my way, and if I failed, I would sulk. Later, I saw that other viewpoints had merits, and I would feel remorseful. Living repeatedly in the bondage of corrupt disposition, made me very distressed. I prayed to God about this, asking Him to enlighten and guide me. Afterward, I found God's words exposing the nature of human arrogance to eat and drink. God's words say: **"Being arrogant and self-righteous is man's most conspicuous satanic disposition, and if people do not accept the truth, they will have no way of cleansing it. People all have arrogant and self-righteous dispositions, and they are always conceited. No matter what they think, or what they say, or how they see things, they always think that their own points of view and their own attitudes are correct, and that what others say is not as good or as right as what they say. They always cling to their own opinions, and no matter who speaks, they will not listen to them. Even if what someone else says is correct, or in line with the truth, they will not accept it; they will only appear to be listening but they will not really adopt the idea, and when it comes time to act, they will still do things their own way, always thinking that what they say is right and reasonable. It is possible that what you say is, indeed, right and reasonable, or that what you have done is right and faultless, but what kind of disposition have you revealed? Is it not one of arrogance and self-righteousness? If you do not cast off this arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not affect your performance of your duty? Will it not affect your practice of the truth? If you do not resolve your arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not cause you serious setbacks in the future? You will definitely experience setbacks, this is inevitable. Tell Me, can God see such behavior of man? God is more than able to see it! God not only scrutinizes the depths of**

people's hearts, He also observes their every word and deed at all times and places. What will God say when He sees this behavior of yours? God will say: 'You are intransigent! It's understandable that you might cling to your own ideas when you do not know that you are mistaken, but when you clearly know that you are mistaken and you still cling to your ideas, and would die before repenting, you are just a stubborn fool, and you are in trouble. If, no matter who makes a suggestion, you always adopt a negative, resistant attitude toward it, and do not accept even a little bit of the truth, and if your heart is completely resistant, closed, and dismissive, then you are so ridiculous, you are an absurd person! You are too difficult to deal with!' In what way are you difficult to deal with? You are difficult to deal with because what you are displaying is not an erroneous approach, or an erroneous behavior, but a revelation of your disposition. A revelation of what disposition? A disposition in which you are averse to the truth, and hate the truth. Once you have been identified as a person who hates the truth, in God's eyes you are in trouble, and He will spurn and ignore you" (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). After reading God's words, I felt as though I was pricked in my heart, I saw that I was exactly the kind of obstinate, intransigent, and arrogant person that God described. A person with normal reason would become more restrained after a few failures and exposures, and when faced with matters, they would think more and seek more, and not dare to insist on their own opinions too much. But a person who is arrogant, self-righteous, and unreasonable, regardless of how many failures they face, these things will not reach their heart, and deep down, they still feel they are right. They can't let go of themselves to listen to others' opinions, and even if they know others are right, they still stubbornly cling

to their own views. I was exactly this kind of person. Looking back at my time as a gospel deacon, if I was certain about something, no one could shake my views, and even when I admitted that others were right, it was hard for me to immediately submit. I always thought, “You are right, but I’m more right. My reasoning is more solid than yours, and my views are more accurate and profound. Why should I listen to you?” So I often stubbornly argued with everyone; regardless of whether others were right or wrong, so long as it didn’t align with my own wishes, I couldn’t accept it. Wasn’t I putting myself at the center? I always wanted people to submit to me and listen to me, and I viewed myself as high and great. Wasn’t I treating my own opinions as the truth? Previously, I only admitted that I did not love or pursue the truth, but now, after reading what God says, about how people are always obstinate, intransigent, and arrogant, never accepting anyone else’s words, I became aware that such people are averse to the truth. At that moment, I realized that my problem was really very serious. The suggestions given to me by brothers and sisters were made with a sense of responsibility for the work of God’s house, and if I had just been able to accept them and seek the truth together with everyone, it would have been beneficial for both myself and the church work. But I didn’t know what was right from wrong, so not only did I not accept these things, but I also emphasized my own correctness, and made everyone listen to me, as if accepting others’ suggestions would make me appear incompetent, ignorant, and devalued. I realized that I did not love positive things or accept the truth at all. By stubbornly clinging onto myself like this, I couldn’t cooperate with anyone. Wouldn’t I eventually be eliminated by God and rejected by everyone?

Afterward, I read more of God’s words: **“It may be that you are the most knowledgeable about your profession and lead in terms of skill,**

but this is a gift that God has given you, and you should use it to perform your duty and make use of your strengths. No matter how skilled or talented you are, you cannot undertake the work alone; a duty is performed more effectively if everyone is able to grasp the skills and knowledge of a profession. As the saying goes, an able man needs the support of three other people. No matter how capable an individual is, without the help of everyone else, it's not enough. Therefore, none should be arrogant and none should wish to act or make decisions on their own. People should rebel against the flesh, put aside their own ideas and opinions, and work in harmony with everyone else” (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). From God's words, I realized that each of our personal experiences, understanding, and insights are very limited. God wants us to bring forth the part of ourselves that we possess, not for us to pursue being a superior or perfect person who shoulders all the work alone. No matter how capable a person is, their abilities are still limited, and sometimes, they can be liable to go their own ways and disrupt the church's work. Only when brothers and sisters work together with one heart and mind, harmoniously cooperating, relying on God together to seek the truth and obtain the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and guidance, with each bringing forth their own strengths, can duties achieve better results. After realizing these things, I began to focus more on listening to others' opinions and learning from their strengths. When I changed my mindset, I saw that the brothers and sisters around me each had their own strengths that I didn't possess. Some brothers and sisters focus on understanding God's intention and seeking the truth when faced with matters, learning lessons from both good and bad situations; some are conscientious and responsible in their duties, and focus on putting effort into principles; some may have average

caliber, but they are humble and willing to learn from others, and are able to accept others' guidance and help, and so, they can make progress over time. In contrast, although I had some gifts and caliber, I didn't focus on praying to God or seeking the truth principles when faced with matters, and I only focused on putting effort into my work. I relied on my own intellect and knowledge to analyze right and wrong, working based on gifts and caliber, so I was rarely able to see God's guidance. By relying on my gifts, I gained some people while evangelism, but I did not give the glory to God. Instead, I put the crown on my own head, thinking that this had all been due to my own abilities and caliber. As a result, my disposition became increasingly arrogant, and I disregarded others and left no place for God in my heart. Every day, I appeared busy, but I had no understanding of my own corrupt disposition, and I made no progress in life entry, and so ultimately, I lost God's blessing and guidance in my duties. I saw that, not submitting to the truth and always being arrogant and stubborn is such a huge loss!

A few days later, I came across a piece of God's fellowship, and it made things even clearer in my heart. God says: **"For people to achieve continual life growth and to attain a change in their life disposition, they must experience judgment, chastisement, and pruning while doing their duty; once they reach a point of truly knowing themselves, they begin to change. How specifically is this experienced? It is by first of all having a mentality of submission in everything that befalls you. Having a mentality of submission is the first hurdle to pass and the first condition that people should meet. This is very crucial. ... Although people believe in God, their understanding of the truth is too shallow, and they still do not realize that when they come before God they must know to behave properly. What does this proper behavior consist of? No matter how important a person you are, how high your position, or**

how great your abilities, as long as you are a created being, the first precept when coming before God is to submit to God, submit to the Creator. Some people say, 'I have achieved great merits before.' Then should you submit to God? Even if you have achieved great merits, you are still a created being. God is the Creator. Your primary responsibility is to submit to God. Whatever God says, you must absolutely submit, you should not have your own choices. Is this the highest truth? This is the highest truth, and also the most fundamental truth. However, the majority of people, even after believing in God for ten or twenty years, still do not understand this fundamental truth of submitting to God. Why is this? If people do not even understand the most crucial truth in believing in God—to submit to God—what other truths could they possibly understand? You know who the Creator is, and you are willing to come before Him, but you do not know that submitting to God is your responsibility, your obligation, and your duty, that it is the reason and instinct you should possess as a human being. If you do not understand even the most fundamental truth of believing in God, then is it not empty talk for you to say that you understand the truth? What you understand is all empty doctrine; that's why you are able to scrutinize God, to have notions and misunderstandings about God, to be suspicious of, judge, argue with, and oppose God—these revelations of corruption and actions of resisting God all emerge. If people do not understand the truth of submitting to God, the various corrupt dispositions they reveal cannot be resolved” (God's Fellowship). Contemplating God's words, I was deeply moved. In reality, aren't the people, events, and things that do not align with our wishes every day—including the differing opinions and suggestions from brothers and sisters, being pruned, criticized and rebuked, along with

the difficulties, setbacks, and failures in our duties, all under God's sovereignty and arrangements? As a believer, when facing matters, the first thing I should do is submit and seek the truth to learn lessons from these things. However, I saw these things that didn't align with my wishes as troubles and obstacles, and my initial feelings were of resistance, impatience, and unwillingness to accept, and I did not consider why others didn't endorse my views, or whether my views were even in line with the truth. Even if I grudgingly accepted others' suggestions at times, I still felt as if I were being stifled and left with no other choice, lacking even the most basic attitude of submission. In my duties, I always acted on my arrogant disposition, acting arbitrarily and making decisions on my own, leaving no place for God in my heart and having no submission to Him at all. How was I any different from a nonbeliever? I needed to learn to submit to God and the truth in all matters, and to set aside my own intentions during the process of submission so that my arrogant disposition can be transformed.

Later, when working with brothers and sisters, I consciously focused on entering into the truth of submission to God and harmonious cooperation with others, and when facing matters, regardless of whether they aligned with my wishes or not, I practiced accepting them from God first and maintaining an attitude of submission. I stopped rushing to make judgments on the suggestions from brothers and sisters, and discussed and sought with everyone. When discussing work, if I saw that the suggestions from brothers and sisters did not align with my own views, although I felt troubled, by praying to God and asking Him to keep me in a state of submitting first, I would see the merits in their suggestions. Although the suggestions were not yet perfect or specific, we continued to discuss and fellowship the topic, and as everyone fellowshiped in turn, my heart

became clearer and clearer. I experienced that submitting to the truth and acting according to God's words in all things truly allows one to see God's guidance and deeds, and that this practice brings brightness and enjoyment to the heart, and also helps in learning from the strengths of others. This was so different from my previous stubbornness and self-righteousness. This small change has given me faith, and I no longer pass verdict on myself. I believe that so long as I am willing to pay a price and strive for the truth, my corrupt disposition will surely change. Thank God for His salvation!

40. Experiencing Dismissal

By Bing Qi, China

In 2022, the church leader arranged for me to water some new believers who were of quite good caliber. Inwardly I was flattered by this, feeling that for me to be regarded so highly by the leaders that they had chosen me for this duty over all the other waterers, it must mean that I was doing pretty well. Two months later, a new sister named Chen Dan joined our team. She was of pretty good caliber, she had the ability to comprehend, and she made rapid progress. When watering new believers, she fellowshipped the truths quite clearly and thoroughly, and she also had the ability to express herself well with language, and fellowshipped in a lucid and structured way. I immediately felt a sense of crisis, thinking, “Chen Dan has good caliber and is progressing so quickly. If this continues, won’t she surpass me? If she does, it will mean that I’m not as good as she is, and what dignity will I have left then?” With this in mind, I secretly resolved to work hard to equip myself with the truths and improve my expressive ability, determined not to let her surpass me no matter what. However, no matter how hard I tried, my progress was minimal. When solving problems, the more I wanted to express myself well, the more incoherent I became, unable even to make use of the expressive ability I already had. Seeing Chen Dan being able to fellowship on the truths to resolve problems made me feel very discouraged. A while later, Chen Dan was selected to be the team leader. I was filled with jealousy and felt that my pride was completely ruined. I disliked her from the bottom of my heart, feeling that it was her presence that made me so discomfited. After that, I was gloomy every day, lacking enthusiasm in my duty, and even complaining to God for not giving me good caliber like she had. Sometimes, when Chen Dan

arranged certain tasks for me, I was uncooperative and pulled a long face at her. When she pointed out the problems in my watering work, I felt resistant and said some quite harsh words. Later, two more sisters joined our team. When I saw them seeking help from Chen Dan instead of me, it felt like a slap in the face. I was very upset about it, and blamed it on her overshadowing me, so my jealousy toward her grew even stronger. As the team leader, Chen Dan was responsible for taking care of all the various tasks. When she got overwhelmed, she asked me to help cultivate the new believers. I thought, “If I cultivate the new believers well, won’t all the credit go to you?” So I refused, telling her, “You’re the team leader, cultivating new believers is your job.” During a gathering, Chen Dan fellowshipped that being a team leader was challenging and that she was considering stepping down from this duty. On hearing this, instead of reflecting on myself, I took pleasure in her difficulties and inwardly mocked her, thinking, “Aren’t you supposed to be better than me in every way? Then you should handle everything.” I even offered my resignation multiple times. In the end, I was dismissed from my position because my jealousy of her abilities was exerting a bad influence on the team.

During my devotional, I read a passage of God’s words: **“Antichrists’ public suppression of people, exclusion of people, attacks against people, and exposure of people’s problems are all targeted. Without a doubt, they use means such as these to target those who pursue the truth and can discern them. By breaking these people down, they achieve the goal of strengthening their own position. Attacking and excluding people like this is malicious in nature. There is aggression in their language and manner of speech: exposure, condemnation, slander, and evil calumny. They even twist facts, speaking of positive things as though they were negative and negative as though they were positive.**

Reversing black and white and mixing up right and wrong like this accomplishes antichrists' goal of defeating people and ruining their name. What mindset is giving rise to this attack and exclusion of dissenters? Most of the time, it comes from a jealous mindset. In a vicious disposition, jealousy carries strong hatred with it; and as a result of their jealousy, antichrists attack and exclude people. In a situation such as this, if antichrists are exposed, reported, lose their status, and suffer an attack in their mind, they will not submit nor be happy about it, and it will be even easier for them to create a strong mindset of revenge. Revenge is a type of mindset, and it is also a type of corrupt disposition. When antichrists see that what someone did was damaging to them, that others are more capable than them, or that someone's statements and suggestions are better or wiser than theirs, and everyone agrees with that person's statements and suggestions, the antichrists feel their position is threatened, jealousy and hatred arise in their hearts, and they attack and take revenge. When taking revenge, antichrists generally deliver a preemptive blow to their target. They are proactive in attacking and breaking people down, until the other party submits. Only then do they feel they have let off steam. What other manifestations are there of attacking and excluding people? (Belittling others.) Belittling others is one of the ways it is manifested; no matter how good a job you do, antichrists will still belittle you or condemn you, until you are negative and weak and cannot stand. Then they will be happy, and they will have accomplished their goal" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). God exposed that antichrists have vicious dispositions, jealous hearts and a strong desire for status. Once someone around them appears to be better than them and threatens their status, antichrists grow jealous and develop a mindset of

revenge. To secure their status, they may use various tactics to suppress and exclude dissenters. I recalled that when Chen Dan had just arrived, on seeing that she was of good caliber and surpassed me in all aspects, and that the new members in the team also gravitated toward her and held her in high regard, I had felt awful, believing that it was Chen Dan who made me so discomfited, so the jealousy and resentment I harbored toward her burst forth uncontrollably. Later, when Chen Dan had arranged some tasks for me, I didn't cooperate, and gave her a sour look, and spoke to her in a disgruntled tone, which also affected her state. Sometimes, when we were discussing problems, I knew what Chen Dan had said was in line with the principles, but I deliberately held onto my own views and wouldn't let go of them, and even incited others to side with me against her, causing delays in the work. I had known that there was a lot of work and that Chen Dan, being new to the role of team leader, surely faced many challenges, but out of jealousy, I had been deliberately obstructive by not wanting to do my duty as a way to make things difficult for her, wanting to bring her down. Reflecting on these behaviors, I recognized that I was just like an antichrist, with too strong a desire for status, and I recognized that when someone had threatened my position, I had felt jealous and vengeful, and had completely disregarded the church's work, and I recognized that my disposition was vicious and lacked humanity. I recalled that when I had first started being trained in this duty, the leaders specially arranged for someone to guide and help us so that we could quickly grasp the principles and fulfill our duties well. The church had promoted and cultivated me in this way, but I had not followed the right path and had sought fame and gain, trying in every way to exclude my dissenter and disturb the church's work. I really was a nasty thing!

Then I read another passage of God's words: **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to submit to or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. When they do their duty in this way, can this not be defined as walking the path of an antichrist? When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus**

achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the carrying out of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and **negative effect**” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). I used to think that seeking reputation and status was just one's own personal failure to pursue the truth, and that it would only cause losses to one's own life without affecting others. I had always regarded it as a minor revelation of corruption, thinking that everyone had this type of corruption and that it couldn't be changed overnight; it had to be done gradually. I hadn't

understood why God hates the pursuit of reputation and status so much. After reading this passage of God's words, I realized that the pursuit of reputation and status not only damages one's own life but also disturbs the church's work. Chen Dan was the team leader, and I should have supported and cooperated with her in her work. However, out of jealousy, I deliberately hadn't cooperated with her work arrangements and had made things difficult for her, which affected the work of watering. When discussing problems, even though I knew that her fellowshipping was correct, I feared that listening to her would make me appear inferior and lose face. So, I had stubbornly held onto my own views, which resulted in delays to the work. I had even been deliberately obstructive, downed tools, and refused to cooperate even in things that I could do, pushing the work onto Chen Dan in order to put pressure on her. On the surface, it seemed like I had been competing with others for fame and gain, but in fact, I had been resisting God. I had been satisfying my vanity at the cost of delaying the church's work. Only now did I understand that many antichrists are expelled not because they pursue reputation and status or have corrupt dispositions, but because, in pursuing fame and status, they go to any lengths to suppress others and give them a hard time, disturbing the work of God's house and committing many evil deeds. My actions had been the same as those of antichrists in nature. If I didn't repent, I would eventually be expelled from the church for my numerous evil deeds. Reflecting on this made me afraid. At that time, I felt somewhat despondent, wondering if there was still hope for me to be saved after doing so much evil, and if God was using this situation to reveal and eliminate me.

Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"Today you are not just able to look upon God, but more importantly, you have received chastisement and judgment, you have received truly profound**

salvation, which is to say, you have received God's greatest love. In all that He does, God is truly loving toward you. He has no ill intention. It is because of your sins that He judges you, so that you will examine yourselves and receive this tremendous salvation. All this is done for the purpose of making man complete. From beginning to end, God has been doing His utmost to save man, and has no desire to completely destroy the men He created with His own hands. Today, He has come among you to work; is this not salvation all the more? If He hated you, would He still do work of such magnitude in order to personally guide you? Why should He suffer so? God does not hate you or have any ill intentions toward you. You should know that God's love is the truest love. It is only because people are rebellious that He has to save them through judgment; if not for this, saving them would be impossible"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (4)). After reading God's words, I felt deeply touched and realized how unreasonable I had been. Being dismissed today was because I had sought fame and gain, and because I had not walked the right path, but done evil and disturbed the church work. I should therefore accept the disciplining and chastening, rather than misunderstanding God's intention. I also reflected on why I had been able to commit such evil deeds. Besides having a strong desire for reputation and status, I totally lacked a God-fearing heart. Whenever anything had happened that threatened my reputation and status, I tended to act willfully, do evil, and resist God. I also read another passage of God's words: **"So if there is a person who does have a God-fearing heart, how will they behave? (They will not act recklessly or willfully.) These two words are quite suitable. So how do you put not acting recklessly or willfully into practice? (We should have a seeking heart.) When confronted with a problem, some people do seek an**

answer from others, but when the other person speaks according to the truth, they don't accept it, they are not able to obey, and in their hearts, they think, 'I'm normally better than him. If I listen to his suggestion this time, won't it look like he's superior to me? No, I can't listen to him on this matter. I'll just do it my way.' Then they find a reason and an excuse to shoot down the other person's point of view. What kind of disposition is it when a person sees someone who is better than them and they try to bring them down, spreading rumors about them, or employing despicable means to denigrate them and undermine their reputation—even trampling all over them—in order to protect their own place in people's minds? This is not just arrogance and conceit, it is the disposition of Satan, it is a malicious disposition. That this person can attack and alienate people who are better and stronger than them is insidious and wicked. And that they will stop at nothing to bring people down shows that there is much of a devil in them! Living by the disposition of Satan, they are liable to belittle people, to try to stitch them up, to make things hard for them. Is this not evil-doing? And living like this, they still think they're okay, that they're a good person—yet when they see someone better than them, they are liable to give them a hard time, to trample all over them. What is the issue here? Are people who are capable of committing such evil deeds not unscrupulous and willful? Such people only think of their own interests, they only consider their own feelings, and all they want is to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and aims. They don't care how much damage they cause to the work of the church, and they would prefer to sacrifice the interests of the house of God to protect their status in people's minds and their own reputation. Are people like this not arrogant and self-righteous, selfish and vile? Such people are not only arrogant and self-

righteous, they are also extremely selfish and vile. They are not considerate of God's intentions at all. Do such people have God-fearing hearts? They do not have God-fearing hearts at all. This is why they act wantonly and do whatever they want, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What is the nature of such behavior? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal reputation and status; they are too deceitful and insidious. To put it more harshly, the essence of the problem is that such people have no God-fearing heart at all. They are not frightened of God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is not worthy of mention and is insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Can those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not have God-fearing hearts, put the truth into practice? Absolutely not. So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are for the sake of their own status and prestige, of protecting all of their interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What kind of people have believed in God for many years, yet have no God-fearing hearts? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satans? And what things most lack a God-fearing heart? Apart from the beasts, it is the evil and the antichrists, the devils and Satan's ilk" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must

Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Reading God's words, I felt deeply pained in my heart and saw that I was exactly the kind of person He had exposed, the kind of person without a God-fearing heart. God said that only beasts, evil people, antichrists, devils, and Satan have no God-fearing heart at all, and I could sense God's loathing and hatred for such people. Thinking about it, although I believed in God, there was no place for Him in my heart; I had always prioritized my own reputation and status, even going so far as to suppress and exclude others by any means. On seeing that Chen Dan had better caliber than I did, I became jealous and compared myself to her in everything. After Chen Dan had become the team leader, I felt that having her arrange tasks for me damaged my pride since I had been doing watering work longer than she had. So, I deliberately refused to cooperate with her and made things difficult for her. Even during discussions, I had always saved face by refusing to accept her appropriate suggestions, for fear that heeding her would make me seem inferior to her. Eventually, on seeing that she surpassed me in every aspect and I couldn't outshine her, I felt that there was no prospect of me standing out in the team, so I became deliberately obstructive and resisted doing my duty. This revealed that I had no fear of God in my heart and lacked humanity. If I'd had even the slightest fear of God in my heart, I wouldn't have done such evil deeds, nor would I have dared to take out my frustrations on the church's work. Not only had I failed to do my duties sincerely, but I had also disturbed others from doing theirs and disturbed the church's work. How could this not provoke God's loathing? This dismissal was the result of God's righteous disposition coming upon me—I had asked for it. I felt deep regret and self-blame, and silently, I prayed to God, confessed, and repented.

Next, I tried to figure out how to solve my problem of being jealous of those who are talented and capable, and how to deal with my ambition of pursuing reputation and status. One day, I read God's words: **"The gifts and abilities that people are born with are bestowed by God. They were predetermined by God long ago. If God made you foolish, then there is meaning in your foolishness; if He made you bright, then there is meaning in your brightness. Whatever talents God gives you, whatever your strengths, however high your IQ, they all have a purpose for God. All these things were preordained by God. The role you play in your life and the duty you do were ordained by God long ago. Some people see that others possess strengths they do not and are discontent. They want to change things by learning more, seeing more, and being more diligent. But there is a limit to what their diligence can achieve, and they cannot surpass those with gifts and expertise. No matter how much you fight, it is useless. God has ordained what you will be, and there is nothing anyone can do to change it. Whatever you are good at, that is where you should make an effort. Whatever duty you are suited to is the duty you should perform. Do not try to force yourself into areas outside your skillset and do not envy others. Everyone has their function. Do not think that you can do everything well, or that you are more perfect or better than others, always desiring to replace others and put yourself on display. This is a corrupt disposition. ... When you have a disposition like that, you are always trying to keep others down, always trying to get ahead of them, always jockeying, always trying to take from people. You are highly envious, you don't yield to anyone, and you are always trying to distinguish yourself from the crowd. This spells trouble; this is how Satan acts. If you truly wish to be an acceptable created being, then do not pursue your own dreams. Trying**

to be superior and more capable than you are in order to achieve your aims is bad. You should learn to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and you should stand fast in the place that a human being should occupy; only this is a demonstration of reason" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). After reading God's words, I was moved in my heart. I realized that whenever I encountered people of good caliber, I tended to become jealous and compare myself with them, uncontrollably pursuing reputation and status. This behavior was rooted in my own arrogant disposition, wanting to surpass others in everything. However, the gifts and caliber I have are predestined by God, and there is God's good intention in this. My arrogant disposition made me always want to pursue reputation and status, and if I truly had such a great caliber, who knew how arrogant I would be. I might end up being expelled from the church for committing so much evil and following the antichrist's path. God's predestination of my average caliber is a way of protection for me. Additionally, God does not require us to be superheroes or great people and be superior to others in everything. What God values is that we, according to our statures and calibers, fully utilize what we can do, focusing on fulfilling our duties well with a sincere heart. Chen Dan was of better caliber, and it was her duty to help drive the overall work as the team leader. I should have supported and cooperated with her, learning from her strengths and working harmoniously with her, so that I could have performed my duty better. Regardless of whether our calibers are good or poor, everyone's common goal is to fulfill our duties well, and that is the most important thing. My constant comparison and competition with others was actually resisting God and not submitting to God's sovereignty and arrangements, and only led me to suffer from Satan's torments. Reflecting on how I didn't cherish the opportunity to do my

duties, and instead, focused on fighting and competing with others, I felt somewhat regretful.

A few months later, the leaders arranged for me to work with Chen Dan and others. Initially, I was a bit worried, fearing that I might again reveal corrupt dispositions. However, I also knew that this situation was arranged by God and was an opportunity for me to repent; I didn't want to disappoint God, so I needed to face it. I consciously prayed more to God, asking for His protection so that I could live in His presence, and constantly reminded myself not to seek fame and gain, or compare myself with others. I remembered once, I noticed a sister making significant progress, and I immediately felt a bit lost and anxious, afraid that the sister would surpass me and that I would become the worst in the team and lose face. I quickly realized that I was comparing myself with others again and consciously prayed to God in my heart. I thought of God's words that I had read before: **"If you truly wish to perform your duty well, you must first find the right station for you, and then do what you can with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength, and do your very best. This is satisfactory, and such performance of duty has a measure of purity. This is what a real created being should do. First, you must understand what a real created being is: A real created being is not a superhuman, but a person who lives straightforwardly and practically on the earth; they are not at all extraordinary, and not in the least bit exceptional, but the same as any ordinary person. If you wish to always surpass others, to be ranked above others, then this is brought about by your arrogant, satanic disposition, and it is a delusion caused by your ambition. You cannot, in fact, achieve this, and it is impossible for you to do so. God did not give you such a talent or skill, nor did He give you such an essence. Do not forget that you are an ordinary member of**

mankind, in no way different from others, though your appearance, family, and upbringing may be different, and there may be some differences in your talents and gifts. But do not forget this: No matter how unique you are, it is only in these small ways, and your corrupt disposition is the same as others'. The attitude you should have and the principles to which you must adhere in the performance of your duty are identical to others'. It is merely in their strengths and gifts that people differ" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct).

God's words helped me understand that I am an ordinary created being, a normal person. It's normal to have things I don't know or areas where I am not as good as others. Just because I started practicing watering new believers earlier, it didn't mean I should be better than others in every aspect. Thinking in this way was arrogant and unreasonable. God requires me to be a normal person, to do my best conscientiously, and to fully utilize my capabilities according to my stature and caliber. Besides, God has given each person different calibers and strengths. Working together, we can complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, collaborating harmoniously, which is beneficial for the duty. If the sister has capabilities that I don't, I should learn from her, and this is also God's way of compensating for my deficiencies. Realizing God's intention brought me a sense of relief, and I gradually became more focused on my duties. When I faced Chen Dan again, I was able to support her work and cooperate with her harmoniously. When I encountered things I didn't understand, I was willing to put aside my pride and seek advice from her. Practicing this way made me feel at ease and relieved, and I also made some progress in doing my duties. I thank God for this!

41. Leadership Turning Judas After Arrest

By An Qing, China

On July 4, 2018, Ding Jie, the leader I was partnered with, was followed and arrested. When I heard the news, I was very anxious. The police's methods of tormenting people were so cruel; would she be able to bear it? And, I had interacted with her frequently, so wouldn't I already be under surveillance? Thinking of this, I was somewhat scared. A few days later, I received a letter from my hometown. It said that the police had come to my home to arrest me and also told the villagers to be on the lookout for me. Sister Li Qing from my village was arrested, and the police were still in pursuit of her two daughters. This news was a slap to the face. The police were arresting brothers and sisters everywhere, and I had become a person with no home. Seeing the extent to which the police were mobilizing to arrest believers in God, I felt very indignant. At the same time, I was worried that if I was already under police surveillance, it wouldn't be safe for me here anymore. If the police arrested me, wouldn't I then be tortured? Would I be able to bear it? The more I thought, the more scared I was. I spent the next few days in a state of fear.

Before too long, I heard that Ding Jie couldn't bear the torture and sold out many brothers and sisters, as well as two homes that safekept books of God's words. Back then, the books had been transferred in advance, but the sister from the safekeeping family was arrested, and the police took 300,000 yuan in savings from the home of another sister. Ding Jie even guided the police in arresting brothers and sisters. More than 10 leaders and deacons were arrested in succession. Some brothers' and sisters' homes were raided, and many brothers and sisters left home and went into hiding. It wasn't long before another leader, Xia Yu, was arrested. As she couldn't withstand the

police's threats and intimidation and their torture, and she feared being sentenced to prison, ultimately, she sold out the brothers and sisters and the church's money. When I heard this news, I was astonished and didn't dare believe that it was true. These leaders were really pursuing the truth before this; how could they become sell-outs? Ding Jie and Xia Yu had believed in God for many years. They forsook their families, abandoned their careers, and put all their time into doing their duties. No matter how their families persecuted and obstructed them, they kept believing in God, and they were able to endure suffering and pay a price when doing their duties. How could they all of a sudden turn into Judas? I really didn't get it. They were leaders, and their fellowshiping with brothers and sisters was usually quite good. They should have understood more truths and had more stature than the brothers and sisters, but even some ordinary brothers and sisters could stand firm in their testimony. As leaders, how could they have had even less stature than ordinary brothers and sisters? How could they have just betrayed God? I turned my thoughts to myself. When it came to forsaking and expending, I had not done more than them. They had let go of their work, their parents, and their children, and chosen to do their duties, but when doing my duty, I was still often constrained by affections. They couldn't even stand firm. If I was arrested and the police were going to imprison me, would I be able to stand firm in my testimony? If I betrayed God like them because my flesh couldn't stand the pain and I was afraid of being imprisoned, wouldn't I then have a bad outcome and destination? Wouldn't my years of believing in God have been futile? I couldn't help but worry about myself. I didn't understand why the church had suffered such great persecution, and why so many brothers and sisters had been arrested. The lofty warriors in my mind had all collapsed. During that period of time, I was very despondent. Every day, my face was stricken with concern, and I

would heave sighs of despair. When I read God's words, I didn't take them to heart, and I had no energy when gathering or doing my duty.

A sister saw that I was quite despondent, and reminded me, "You can't go on being negative like this. You have to learn from the brothers and sisters who stand firm in their testimony, read God's words more, and learn more lessons." It took this sister's reminder for me to become aware of how weak I was. My brothers and sisters had experienced the police's persecution and endured so much suffering, and they still knew to rely on God and learn lessons. Why didn't I know to seek God's intention? While seeking, I read a passage of God's words: **"So how can the final stretch of the path be walked? In your days of experiencing tribulation, you must endure all hardships, and you must have the will to suffer; only in this way can you take this stretch of the path well. Do you think it so easy to take this stretch of the path? You should know what function you should fulfill; you must raise your caliber and equip yourselves with adequate truth. This is not the work of one or two days, and it is not as simple as you think! Walking the final stretch of the path depends on what kind of faith and will you really have. Perhaps you cannot see the Holy Spirit working in you, or perhaps you are not able to discover the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, so you are pessimistic and disappointed and full of despair for the road ahead. In particular, the great warriors of the past have all fallen—is all of this not a blow to you? How should you see these things? Do you have faith, or do you not? Do you fully understand today's work, or do you not? These things can determine whether you are able to successfully walk the final stretch of the path"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How You Should Walk the Final Stretch of the Path). After reading God's words, I understood that the persecution and adversity we suffered today was a lesson that God

arranged for each of us. The last stretch of this path is not easy to follow, so we have to have tremendous faith and be equipped with more truths. I saw that many brothers and sisters were arrested, the lofty warriors beside me had collapsed, and many brothers and sisters had fled far and wide, so I became pessimistic and disappointed, and I lost my faith. Was I not right in the middle of Satan's cunning scheme? No matter what God does, it all contains His thoughtfulness, but I didn't seek God's intention and lived inside my own notions and imaginings, regarding what happened with negativity. This was not in line with God's intention! I prayed to God, "God, I don't understand why the church is facing such serious circumstances, and why You have permitted us to suffer the frantic arrests and persecution of the Communist Party. God, please guide me to understand Your intention and guide me out of this state of misunderstanding and despondency."

While seeking, I read a passage of God's words that stirred me rather deeply. Almighty God says: **"Everything that God does is necessary and possessed of extraordinary significance, for all that He does in man concerns His management and the salvation of mankind. Naturally, the work that God did in Job is no different, even though Job was perfect and upright in the eyes of God. In other words, regardless of what God does or the means by which He does it, regardless of the cost, regardless of His objective, the purpose of His actions does not change. His purpose is to work God's words into man, as well as God's requirements and intentions for man; in other words, it is to work into man all that God believes to be positive in accordance with His steps, enabling man to understand God's heart and comprehend God's essence, and allowing man to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, thus allowing man to attain fear of God and shunning of**

evil—all of this is one aspect of God’s purpose in all He does. The other aspect is that, because Satan is the foil and service object in God’s work, man is often given to Satan; this is the means God uses to allow people to see in Satan’s temptations and attacks the wickedness, ugliness, and contemptibility of Satan, thus causing people to hate Satan and be able to know and recognize that which is negative. This process allows them to gradually free themselves from Satan’s control and accusations, disturbances, and attacks—until, thanks to God’s words, their knowledge of God, their submission to God, their faith in God, and fear of God, they triumph over the attacks and accusations of Satan; only then will they have been completely delivered from the power of Satan. People’s deliverance means that Satan has been defeated, it means that they are no longer the food in Satan’s mouth—instead of swallowing them, Satan has relinquished them. This is because such people are upright, because they have faith, submission, and fear toward God, and because they completely break with Satan. They bring shame upon Satan, they make a coward of Satan, and they utterly defeat Satan. Their conviction in following God, and submission to and fear of God defeat Satan, and make Satan completely give them up. Only people such as this have truly been gained by God, and it is this which is God’s ultimate objective in saving man. If they wish to be saved, and wish to be completely gained by God, then all those who follow God must face temptations and attacks both great and small from Satan. Those who emerge from these temptations and attacks and are able to fully defeat Satan are those who have been saved by God”

(The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself II). After reading God’s words, I understood that God’s work is to save people from sin and Satan’s influence, ultimately bringing them into His kingdom. Satan

and devil kings are not content with this, and they frantically arrest and persecute God's chosen people, opposing God in every way and exhausting all means of obstructing God's work. They accuse and attack each person who follows God, attempting to get people to deny God, betray Him, and be punished in hell with them. In the midst of Satan's various temptations and attacks, those of God's chosen people who are able to rely on God, stand firm in their testimony, and humiliate Satan are the ones who can be saved. Meanwhile, those who betray God and compromise with and surrender to Satan lose God's salvation and are revealed and eliminated. Understanding this aspect of the truth, my heart was suddenly bright and clear. Suffering arrest and persecution from Satan's regime is a necessary process of attaining salvation. My being cowardly and scared and thinking of escaping such an environment was useless; what I should do was be equipped with more truths and stand firm in my testimony for God.

After that, I read more of God's words: **"In the nation of the great red dragon, I have carried out a stage of work unfathomable to human beings, causing them to sway in the wind, after which many quietly drift away with the blowing of the wind. Truly, this is the 'threshing floor' I am about to clear; it is what I yearn for and it is also My plan. For many evil ones have crept in while I am at work, but I am in no hurry to drive them away. Rather, I shall disperse them when the time is right. Only after that shall I be the fountain of life, allowing those who truly love Me to receive from Me the fruit of the fig tree and the fragrance of the lily. In the land where Satan sojourns, the land of dust, there remains no pure gold, only sand, and so, meeting with these circumstances, I do such a stage of work. You should know that what I gain is pure, refined gold, not sand. How can the evil remain in My house? How can I allow foxes to be parasites in My paradise? I employ**

every conceivable method to drive these things away. Before My intentions are revealed, no one is aware of what I am about to do. Taking this opportunity, I drive away those evil ones, and they are forced to leave My presence. This is what I do to the evil, but there will still be a day for them to do service for Me” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Seven Thunders Peal—Prophesying That the Gospel of the Kingdom Shall Spread Throughout the Universe). From God’s words, I understood this: The great red dragon is a service object in God’s work. God uses the great red dragon’s arrests and persecution as service to perfect His chosen people, while at the same time revealing those evil people and disbelievers, sorting people according to their kinds. God’s work is so almighty and wise! He uses the frantic persecution and arrests of the great red dragon to perfect people, reveal them, and eliminate them. The wheat, the weeds, the true believers and the false believers—He reveals them all one by one in the midst of this adverse environment. For those who truly believe in God and love the truth, even if they endure suffering and even if they die, they will still follow God to the end and stand firm in their testimony for Him. People who don’t truly believe in God and have no humanity will compromise with and surrender to Satan in all sorts of circumstances. Such people are precisely the weeds that God reveals in His work of the last days; they are those who get eliminated. I thought of one young brother among those who were arrested. The police burned his body with the tip of a cigarette, and splashed cup after cup of scalding hot water onto him. It was unimaginably horrific, but through all that torment, he didn’t betray God. He confronted the police’s brainwashing and used the truth to refute them. He would rather have gone to jail than speak a single phrase of denial or betrayal of God. There was also a sister whose clothes were stripped off, and the police shocked her with stun batons in a dark room to the point where dying

seemed better off than living but she would have rather died than betray God. After being arrested, many brothers and sisters would have rather died than betray God. They gave a resounding testimony for God and humiliated Satan. Even though they were arrested and suffered persecution, and their flesh endured some suffering, after seeing God's deeds, their faith was perfected. I saw that God's wisdom was exercised based on Satan's cunning scheme. The great red dragon used all kinds of methods to persecute believers in God in a vain attempt to get people to betray and deny Him, but God used such an environment to perfect a group of people to be overcomers, to be the kingdom's good soldiers, while also revealing and eliminating those disbelievers and evil people who seek bread to satisfy their hunger. I thought that before Ding Jie and Xia Yu were arrested, they were able to forsake and expend themselves, saying over and over that one must stand firm in their testimony for God. On the surface, they appeared to be people who sincerely believed in God, but as soon as they were faced with being arrested and tortured, they protected their own lives and betrayed God, sold out the brothers and sisters, and even became the Communist Party's lackeys. They were precisely the kind of evil people that God revealed. Before, if anyone had said that they were evil people and would betray God, I absolutely would not have believed it. But when the facts were revealed, I saw their nature essence clearly. What they normally spoke was all words and doctrines, all empty theories. I thought about myself again. In the past, I had made a resolution to God that no matter how adverse the circumstances, I would always persist in fulfilling my duty and satisfying Him, and I thought that I was of great stature. But when faced with danger and tribulations, I had lived in a state of horror and fear and lost my faith in which I finally realized that my stature was pitifully small.

Later, I thought of how Ding Jie and Xia Yu had failed. I realized that I had to learn a lesson from their failure. Why did I think that their turning Judas and betraying God was so surprising and hard to accept? Thinking about it meticulously, I saw that there was an erroneous view within me. I thought that because they were leaders, they had forsaken their families and abandoned their careers to do their duties, and their fellowships were usually very good, that they must understand the truth and have reality, that their stature was greater than that of the brothers and sisters, and that they wouldn't betray God so easily. I saw that my criteria for judging them were incorrect. I read a passage of God's words: **"When someone is elected to be a leader by the brothers and sisters, or is promoted by the house of God to do a certain piece of work or perform a certain duty, this does not mean that they have a special status or position, or that the truths they understand are deeper and more numerous than those of other people—much less that this person is able to submit to God, and will not betray Him. Certainly, it does not mean, either, that they know God, and are someone who fears God. They have attained none of this, in fact. The promotion and cultivation is merely promotion and cultivation in the straightforward sense, and is not equivalent to them having been predestined and approved of by God. Their promotion and cultivation simply means they have been promoted, and await cultivation. And the ultimate outcome of this cultivation depends on whether this person pursues the truth, and on whether they are capable of choosing the path of pursuing the truth. Thus, when someone in the church is promoted and cultivated to be a leader, they are merely promoted and cultivated in the straightforward sense; it does not mean that they are already an up-to-standard leader, or a competent one, that they are already capable of undertaking the work of a leader, and**

can do real work—that is not the case” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). From God’s words, I realized this: When someone is chosen to be a leader, it is only an opportunity for training. It does not at all mean that they understand the truth and have reality. What’s more, whether or not they can stand firm in the end is determined by their nature essence and the path they walk. It has nothing to do with whether or not they are leaders. However high one’s status, however much they appear to forsake and expend, and however enthusiastic and able to endure suffering they are, if when matters befall them, they only safeguard their personal interests, have no place for God in their heart, and can betray God at any time or in any place, then they do not have the truth reality. In the past, I believed that leaders and workers knowing how to fellowship with others showed that they understood God’s intentions and His demands, that their stature was greater than that of the brothers and sisters, and that they could stand firm when faced with trials. All of these were my notions and imaginings. Now, I understood that whether someone has the truth reality mainly depends on whether the knowledge they fellowship is what they are actually living out. However nice the words that come from their mouths, if they cannot live them out, then what they are fellowshiping is just doctrines; it is impractical, and they don’t genuinely understand the truth. Having status does not equate to having the truth reality, and being a leader and having status does not mean that someone can then know and submit to God, let alone love God and have humanity. When judging a person, one must not look at how high or low their status is, but look at what they are actually living out. If this person can submit, be loyal to God, and genuinely know God when matters befall them, and they can give up their life and satisfy God in the critical moment, this means they have the truth reality. Ding Jie and Xia Yu

appeared to be able to forsake and expend themselves on the surface, but when faced with danger, they thought only of their own interests and considered only their own safety, and could not be loyal to God and safeguard the interests of God's house. They were not at all people who genuinely pursued the truth. That they could forsake and expend themselves, endure suffering, and pay a price was because they were controlled by their intentions to receive blessings; they wanted to gain benefits from God. Once they were faced with circumstances that involved their personal interests, they were able to abandon God without the slightest hesitation. They were not at all people who truly believed in God. Their forsaking and expending themselves was not done sincerely; rather, they were making a transaction with God. Additionally, there was another reason that they betrayed God, which was that they treasured their flesh too much, didn't want to endure the suffering of imprisonment, and feared death. Thus, they turned Judas. Realizing the reason why they failed, I thought of how I was also cowardly and also feared that one day I would be arrested and unable to bear the torture and betray God. So, I silently prayed to God, "God, please guide me to the truths I should equip myself with in order not to betray You."

While seeking, I read this passage of God's words: **"Something happens that requires you to endure hardship, at which time you should understand what God's intentions are and how you should be considerate of His intentions. You must not satisfy yourself: First put yourself to one side. Nothing is more abject than the flesh. You must seek to satisfy God, and you must fulfill your duty. With such thoughts, God will bring especial enlightenment to you in this matter, and your heart will also find comfort. Be it big or small, when something happens to you, you must first put yourself to one side and regard the**

flesh as the most lowly of all things. The more you satisfy the flesh, the more liberties it takes; if you satisfy it this time, next time it will ask for more. As this carries on, people come to love the flesh even more. The flesh always has extravagant desires; it always asks that you satisfy it and that you gratify it within, whether it be in the things you eat, what you wear, or in losing your temper, or pandering to your own weaknesses and laziness.... The more you satisfy the flesh, the greater its desires become and the more debauched the flesh becomes, until it gets to the point when people's flesh harbors even deeper notions, and rebels against God, and exalts itself, and becomes doubtful about the work of God. The more you satisfy the flesh, the greater the weaknesses of the flesh; you will always feel that no one sympathizes with your weaknesses, you will always believe that God has gone too far, and you will say: 'How could God be so harsh? Why won't He give people a break?' When people satisfy the flesh and cherish it too much, then they ruin themselves" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). From God's words, I understood that the flesh belongs to Satan. We have been too deeply corrupted by Satan, and we all live according to the satanic poison of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Living like this, one only considers themselves, and only thinks about their own interests first in whatever they do. In order for their flesh to not endure suffering, they can do things that violate their own conscience and go against humanity. Just like when people were arrested by the Communist Party and faced with all kinds of torture and imprisonment, if they always thought of their flesh enduring less suffering, or of not being beaten and not going to jail, they would be able to sell out their brothers and sisters and betray God. In the end, their fleshly interests were satisfied, but their life had been ruined, and they lost God's salvation forever and would

fall into hell with Satan to be punished. Reflecting on myself, I realized that I treasured my flesh too much, always wanting to believe in God comfortably and not wanting my flesh to endure any suffering. When the environment was comfortable, I could still do my duty, but when faced with arrests and persecution, I became cowardly and scared, afraid that I would be arrested and tortured, and that I would go to jail. I lived in horror every day. Satan was using my fondness for my flesh and my not wanting to endure suffering to make me betray God. I thought of the Lord Jesus who appeared and worked during His incarnation. When He knew that He was going to be crucified, although He was in pain and weak at the time, He was still able to submit to God's will, to endure all sorts of humiliation, pain, ridicule, and slander, to be whipped, to wear a crown of thorns, to walk step-by-step to the place where He would be crucified, and ultimately be nailed to the cross. The second time God became flesh, He was met with every possible kind of pursuit and persecution from the Communist Party, and in such an environment, He still expressed the truth and performed the work of saving humanity. In order to save humanity, God endured all this suffering without a word of complaint. God's love for humanity is too great! Meanwhile, I was believing in God so that I could be saved, and when I endured a bit of suffering, I would blame and misunderstand God. I was really too selfish, despicable, and lacking in humanity!

Later on, I found a path to practice in God's words. Almighty God says: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against**

Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith. No matter what your actual stature is, you must first possess both the will to suffer hardship and true faith, and you must also have the will to rebel against the flesh. You should be willing to endure personal hardships and suffer losses to your personal interests in order to satisfy God's intentions. You must also be capable of feeling regret about yourself in your heart: In the past, you were unable to satisfy God, and now, you can regret yourself. You must not be lacking in any of these regards—it is through these things that God will perfect you. If you cannot meet these criteria, then you cannot be perfected” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). Pondering God's words, I understood this: What God does in the last days is the work of judging and purifying man. He uses all sorts of miserable environments to try and refine us, to make us gain knowledge of our corrupt dispositions and our incorrect intentions, so that in the end, we can rebel against our flesh, let go of the extravagant desires inside us, submit to God no matter what He does, and be willing to endure fleshly hardship and choose to satisfy God; only such people can be perfected by Him. God uses all sorts of miserable environments to refine man's will to endure suffering and perfect man's faith, love, and true submission to God. People cannot gain such truth realities in comfortable environments. It's just like how experiencing the environment of the Communist Party's arrests and persecution this time made me see my true stature clearly. I saw that I had no faith in God, and I also gained some knowledge of my selfish and despicable corrupt disposition. I understood that God used the Communist Party's frantic arrests and persecution to perfect a group of people to be overcomers, and also used it to reveal and

eliminate disbelievers and evil people. I saw that God's wisdom was exercised based on Satan's cunning scheme. These are truths that I would not have gained in a comfortable environment.

Through this experience, I saw more clearly the wicked nature of the Communist Party's resistance of God. A hatred for it emerged in my heart, and I was even more determined to follow God. I was also willing to do my duty well to humiliate Satan. I thought of the lyrics of the song "Life's Testimony": "One day I may be captured and persecuted for bearing witness to God. This suffering is for the sake of righteousness, which I know in my heart. If my life is gone like a spark in the blink of an eye, I will still feel proud that I can follow Christ and bear witness to Him in this life. If I cannot see the great event of the expansion of the kingdom gospel, I will still offer up the most beautiful wishes. If I cannot see the day the kingdom is realized, but I can shame Satan today, then my heart will be filled with joy and peace" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). Quietly singing this song, I wept tears of emotion, and I was determined to follow God to the end.

42. I Now Know the Benefits of Writing Experiential Testimony Articles

By Guang Chun, China

In 2020, I was a church leader. I saw that some brothers and sisters wrote a few good experiential testimony articles, and I envied them. However, I didn't place much importance on writing these articles, always thinking that only people with caliber and writing skills could write good ones. My caliber was poor, and my understanding of the truth was shallow. For me, writing articles was a waste of time, and I might as well use that time to do a bit more work. If I didn't do good work, it would look like I didn't have a sense of burden, and the brothers and sisters would think poorly of me. On top of that, writing articles was a personal matter, and it was up to me whether or not I did it. I was better off working and gathering a bit more so that the brothers and sisters would praise my sense of burden. Therefore, I didn't want to take the time to write articles. I went on like this, each day only focusing on doing work and gathering with the brothers and sisters. When things happened to me, I rarely self-reflect. Sometimes, I was able to recognize what kind of corrupt disposition I had revealed, but I didn't seek the truth to resolve it. The brothers and sisters I was partnered with pointed out that I didn't focus on life entry, yet I still reasoned with them and was unaccepting. Although I was busy with gatherings every day, since I didn't put importance on self-reflecting, self-understanding, or seeking the truth, I didn't have any life entry, and during gatherings, I could only speak some doctrines or words of exhortation and encouragement, unable to resolve actual issues. Just like me, lots of brothers and sisters were busy with work, and they didn't focus on life entry, their duties didn't yield any results, and they felt somewhat negative. One time, a supervisor

said that he couldn't do actual work, that he was living in a negative state and didn't want to do supervising duties. I couldn't see the root cause of his negativity clearly and didn't know how to resolve it. It was only resolved when the sister I was partnered with went to fellowship with him later on. Back then, I didn't reflect on my state and still thought that running about and gathering more meant that I had a sense of burden. After a period of time, my heart grew empty, and I had no gains whatsoever.

One time, a sister asked me whether I had written experiential testimony articles. She fellowshipped with me, saying that writing articles could impel us to quiet our hearts and seek the truth, achieving life entry. Later, I read a passage of God's words which reversed my attitude on writing testimony articles. God says: **"What you have received is not merely My truth, My way, and My life, but a vision and revelation greater than that of John. You understand many more mysteries, and have also looked upon My true countenance; you have accepted more of My judgment and know more of My righteous disposition. And so, though you were born in the last days, your understanding is that of the former and the past, and you have also experienced the things of today, and this was all personally done by Me. What I ask of you is not excessive, for I have given you so much, and you have seen much in Me. Thus, I ask you to bear witness for Me to the saints of ages past, and this is My heart's only desire"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). In these few years of believing in God, I had come to understand some truths, gained some knowledge about my corrupt dispositions, and transformed my views on some things. This was the result of God doing work on me. In writing about what I'd gained, I would be testifying to God; it was my responsibility, not to mention my duty. I should treat it as an obligation; that would be in line with God's intention.

However, I had never treated writing experiential testimony as a duty. Instead, I thought of it as something optional, and regarded it with an attitude of great indifference. I was not proactive at all. I had experienced God's work; if I didn't write down my experiences and testify to God, I would be covering up His grace and blessings and would lack a conscience and reason.

After this, I had a vague awareness that my unwillingness to write experiential articles and testify to God was a manifestation of not loving the truth. At the time, I thought of a passage of God's words, which I then found and read. Almighty God says: **"The most obvious state of people who are averse to the truth is that they are not interested in the truth and positive things, they are even repulsed by them and loathe them, and they especially like to follow trends. They do not accept in their hearts the things that God loves and what God requires people to do. Instead, they are dismissive and indifferent toward them, and some people even often despise the standards and principles that God requires of man. They are repulsed by positive things, and they always feel resistant, opposed, and full of contempt toward them in their hearts. This is the primary manifestation of being averse to the truth. ... There are many people who believe in God who like to do work for Him and run around enthusiastically for Him, and when it comes to putting their gifts and strengths to use, indulging their preferences and showing off, they have boundless energy. But if you ask them to practice the truth and act according to the truth principles, it takes the wind from their sails, and they lose their enthusiasm. If they are not allowed to show off, they grow listless and despondent. Why is it that they have energy for showing off? And why is it that they have no energy for practicing the truth? What is the problem here? People all**

like to distinguish themselves; they all covet empty glory. Everyone has inexhaustible energy when it comes to believing in God for the sake of gaining blessings and rewards, so why do they grow listless, why are they despondent when it comes to practicing the truth and rebelling against the flesh? Why does this happen? It proves that people's hearts are adulterated. They believe in God entirely for the sake of gaining blessings—to put it plainly, they do so in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Without blessings or benefits to pursue, people grow listless and despondent, and have no enthusiasm. This is all caused by a corrupt disposition that is averse to the truth. When controlled by this disposition, people are unwilling to choose the path of pursuing the truth, they go their own way, and they choose the incorrect path—they know full well that it is wrong to pursue fame, gain, and status and yet still cannot bear to do without these things or to put them aside, and they still pursue them, walking the path of Satan. In this case, they are not following God, but following Satan. Everything they do is in service of Satan, and they are servants of Satan” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God exposed that people who are averse to the truth like negative things rather than positive things. This was how I was. If I could run around and do more work to show the brothers and sisters that I had a sense of burden, or if I could show myself off and get the superior leader to think highly of me, I would put unlimited effort toward it, not hesitating to spend any amount of time or energy. Meanwhile, when it came to writing experiential testimony articles, although I knew all too well that it was in line with God's intention and beneficial to my life entry, I thought it would delay my work, so I was particularly opposed to it. I would also find reasons and make excuses, saying I was busy with work and had no time to write. In reality, it wasn't that I didn't have time, but that my nature was

averse to the truth. I didn't want to write articles, nor did I want to put effort into pursuing the truth. I saw that my attitude toward the truth was very cold, and that I was repulsed by, opposed to, and averse to positive things. I was walking a mistaken path that went against God's demands. Understanding this, I was scared, and I wanted to reverse course and change.

I also reflected and understood that my unwillingness to write articles was influenced by a fallacious view of mine; I thought that I wasn't a skilled writer and couldn't write good testimony articles. Looking at it now, this was an absurd view. When writing articles, it doesn't matter how good of a writer one is. Someone can't write a good testimony article just because they use flowery language. What's important is whether someone has real experiential understanding. Without experience, one can only write empty doctrines regardless of their writing skills. Understanding this, my mentality changed quite a bit, and I came before God and prayed to Him, "God, I've always placed importance on outwardly rushing around and doing work, and I haven't come before You to quietly ponder Your words. I've wasted so much time not pursuing the truth. From now on, I'm willing to quiet myself in front of You and seek the truth and resolve problems."

Then, I read more of God's words: **"Regarding work, man believes that work is to run around for God, preach everywhere, and expend for His sake. Though this belief is correct, it is too one-sided; what God asks of man is not solely to run around for Him; beyond just this, this work is concerned with ministry and provision within the spirit. Many brothers and sisters, even after all these years of experience, have never thought about working for God, because work as conceived by man is incongruous with what God asks. Therefore, man has no interest whatsoever in the matter of work, and this is precisely the reason why**

the entry of man is also quite one-sided. All of you should begin your entry with working for God, so that you may better undergo every aspect of experience. This is what you should enter into. Work refers not to running around for God, but to whether the life of man and what man lives out are able to give God enjoyment. Work refers to people using their devotion to God and their knowledge of God to testify about God, and also to minister to man. This is man's responsibility and this is what all men should understand. One could say that your entry is your work, and that you are seeking to enter during the course of working for God. Experiencing God's work does not merely mean that you know how to eat and drink of His word; more importantly, you must know how to testify about God and be able to serve God and be able to minister to and provide for man. This is work, and it is also your entry; this is what every person should accomplish. There are many who only focus on running around for God and preaching everywhere, yet overlook their individual experience and neglect their entry into the spiritual life. This is what has led those who serve God to become those who resist God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (2)). After reading God's words, I understood that one must have life experience to truly perform the church's work. Only when one fellowships on the truth and resolves actual problems are they doing actual work, and only when one produces results in their work are they truly doing their duty. In the past, I believed that if I ran around and gathered more with brothers and sisters, that meant I was doing actual work. This is an incorrect view that does not comply with God's words at all. Thinking back on all the times that I gathered and fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters, I was always unable to see through to the root cause of the problem when dealing with their states and difficulties. I couldn't point out the crux of the issue,

only speaking some words and doctrines to exhort them or giving them some regulations for how to act, totally unable to show the path to practice. No matter how much I fellowshiped, this was impractical and wouldn't resolve the brothers and sisters' problems. The brothers and sisters didn't know how to experience God's work, and they lived inside their corrupt dispositions when encountering difficulties. They couldn't stop themselves from being negative and weak, and the problems in their work went on existing all the same. How could this be called doing my duty? I was fooling and cheating both God and the brothers and sisters. Only at this time did I finally see clearly that a superficial sense of burden is not a true sense of burden. Working and running about more does not mean that one is loyally doing their duty, much less that they are doing actual work. Having a true sense of burden toward one's duty does not mean running around everywhere. Rather, it means the spiritual supply in life, focusing on experiencing God's work in one's duty and seeking the truth when things happen, and trying to recognize what one lacks and find the principles of practice, then using one's experiential knowledge to resolve the brothers and sisters' actual difficulties and issues. Only this enables one to achieve a good result in their duty, and only this is edifying and beneficial to others' life entry. I also came to understand that writing experiential testimony articles could impel me to quiet my heart, ponder God's words, and self-reflect. Only if I understood more truths and gained knowledge about my corrupt dispositions while learning how to resolve them could I see clearly and resolve the brothers and sisters' states and problems. To do my duty well, I had to place importance on life entry, and writing articles was a great path to pursuing the truth. Especially as a leader, I had to put an even greater focus on pursuing the truth and take the initiative to write articles testifying to God. Only then could I do my duty well. Seeing that writing

testimony articles was not an optional matter, I had no excuse not to write them.

I thought of another passage of God's words. Almighty God says: **"No matter how many people a church has, the leader is the head. So what role does this leader play among the members? They lead all of God's chosen people in the church. So what effect do they have throughout the whole church? If this leader takes the wrong path, all those in the church will follow them down the wrong path, which will have a huge impact on all of God's chosen people in the church. Take Paul for example. He led many of the churches he founded and God's chosen people. When Paul went astray, the churches and God's chosen people he led also went astray. So, when leaders take their own diverging path, they are not the only ones who are impacted, the churches and God's chosen people they lead are impacted as well. If a leader is a right person, one who is walking the right path and pursues and practices the truth, then the people they lead will eat and drink God's words normally and pursue the truth normally, and, at the same time, the leader's life experience and progress will be visible to others, and will impact others. So, what is the correct path that a leader should walk? It is being able to lead others to an understanding of the truth and an entry into the truth, and to lead others before God"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). Reading God's words, I truly understood deeply that as a leader and worker, the path I followed was very important. If I didn't focus on pursuing the truth in my duty and only pursued getting people to think highly of me, rushing around and busying myself for the sake of reputation and status and relying on my intellect and gifts to work and preach, then the brothers and sisters I led wouldn't place importance on life entry either and would only live in a state

of doing work. As a leader, not having life entry wasn't just a personal matter; it would also affect and harm the lives of many brothers and sisters. Understanding this, I felt self-reproachful and sad, and I prayed to God, "God, I don't pursue the truth, and I'm walking an incorrect path. I've been neglectful and failed in my work as a leader. I'm indebted to the brothers and sisters, and I'm ashamed at how I've handled Your commission. God! I'm willing to reverse course; please guide me to walk the path of pursuing the truth."

Afterward, I fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters about God's intention, and also about my own experiential understanding. Later, the brothers and sisters' states saw some improvement. Some of them began to self-reflect and tried to know themselves when they ran into problems and difficulties in their duties, learning to find a path from God's words and not live inside a state of negativity. They gradually came to achieve some results in their duties. Seeing such an outcome, I felt that this was the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that it was the result of practicing according to God's words. I also came to understand that if one wants to do their duty well, focusing on pursuing the truth and having life entry are extremely important. From then on, I began to place importance on seeking the truth. Whenever I had experiential understanding, I would practice writing about it. Later on, I wrote several experiential testimony articles and felt that I'd made some gains. In some articles, I targeted a fallacious viewpoint and sought the truth to understand it. When I quieted myself before God and pondered His words, I was able to understand what was wrong with this fallacious view. At the same time, I could clearly see that this fallacious view was blocking me from practicing the truth and affecting the work. In other articles, I self-reflecting on a corrupt disposition I had revealed with regard to a particular matter. From what God's words

exposed, I saw that I was selfish and despicable and didn't live like a true human, and I felt I'd been too deeply corrupted by Satan. Also, in the past, I hadn't focused on life entry and couldn't resolve the brothers and sisters' problems. However, after I practiced writing articles for a period of time, I gradually came to understand some truths. There were some problems that I could see more clearly, and it was beneficial for the brothers and sisters when I fellowshipped about them.

Through reflecting on my attitude toward writing testimony articles, I saw that I wasn't someone who pursued the truth, that I didn't place importance on my life entry, and that I had many incorrect views keeping me from pursuing the truth. All this led to me only focusing on doing work when doing my duty, and I was walking the path of laboring. Doing this, I wouldn't gain the truth no matter how busy I was on the surface. I also came to understand what it means to truly do one's duty and how to practice in order to have a true sense of burden in my duty. I understood too that writing experiential testimony articles was a great path to pursuing the truth. That I can now have these understandings and gains is all due to God's work and guidance.

43. I Learned How to Discern Others Based on God's Words

By Xiao Wei, China

In 2017, I was doing text-based duty in the church. During a gathering, I heard that Chen Xia had been dismissed, and that she was considered an antichrist, and that materials were being prepared for her expulsion. Hearing this news, I was in total turmoil and couldn't calm down—I just couldn't accept it. I met Chen Xia after we'd both found the Lord, and we did our duties together after accepting God's work of the last days. Chen Xia was very enthusiastic back then. Her husband stood in the way of her faith, and she shed many tears over this. Eventually, she divorced her husband. After the divorce, she continued to do her duties with a strong sense of burden. It was particularly noticeable to me how much Chen Xia loved reading God's words, and when I cooperated with her, she would get up in the early hours of winter to read God's words. She would even copy important passages from God's words into a notebook and take them out to read whenever she had time. She'd often tell me, "We need to read God's words more and put effort into them, otherwise we won't be able to do our duties well." I thought to myself, "She loves reading God's words so much, so she must be someone who pursues the truth." And I held her in high regard in my heart, thinking that not only was she able to make sacrifices and do her duties, but that she was also able to put in a lot of effort to read God's words, and that in this regard, I just couldn't compare with her and needed to learn from her. After that, whenever I faced difficulties or didn't understand something, I liked to seek her fellowship and hear her views and advice. Later, when Chen Xia was assigned to another place to do her duties, I felt a real sense of loss. I thought about how just last year she had

been organizing materials for clearing people out. It had barely been any time since then, and now she was being expelled? Could there have been a mistake? But then I thought about how the church has principles for clearing out people, and that they wouldn't be preparing materials for her expulsion without reason. My heart kept turning over and I couldn't focus on the gathering. The leader asked me to write an evaluation of Chen Xia, and I agreed in a perfunctory way without expressing my true thoughts.

When I got home and thought about Chen Xia, I felt uneasy. I thought, "Chen Xia is so dedicated, and she's sacrificed her family and career to do her duties. She's put in so much effort into God's words, but now she's being expelled. I haven't suffered or expended myself as much as she has, nor have I done as much in my duties, and I certainly haven't put in as much effort into God's words. Does this mean I might end up being eliminated and even expelled as well?" These thoughts dampened my motivation in my duties. When I saw the sisters discussing work, I didn't want to participate. I felt it was pointless to put in much effort or pay a price, as in the end, who knows what outcome I'd end up with? Thus, during that period of time, I lost my sense of burden in my duties.

Later, I realized my state was wrong, so I prayed and sought God regarding it. I read God's words: **"There are many thoughts, ideas, and states within people which often influence some of their opinions, perspectives, and standpoints. If you can solve these thoughts, ideas, and states one by one through seeking the truth, then they will not affect your relationship with God. You might have a small stature now, with a shallow understanding of the truth, and because you've only believed in God for a short while or because of various other factors, you don't understand very many truths—but you should grasp one principle: I should submit to everything God does, regardless of**

whether it looks good or bad from the outside, right or wrong, and whether or not it aligns with human notions. I have no right to criticize, assess, analyze, or study if it's right or wrong. What I should do is fulfill my duty as a created being and then practice the truths which I can understand, to satisfy God and not deviate from the true way" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know God's Sovereignty). **"In real life, you first have to think of which truths relate to the people, events, and things you have encountered; it is among these truths that you can find God's intentions and connect what you have encountered with His intentions. If you do not know which aspects of the truth relate to the things you have encountered but instead go directly to seek God's intentions, this is a blind approach which cannot achieve results. If you want to seek the truth and understand God's intentions, first you need to look at what kind of things have happened to you, which aspects of the truth they are related to, and look for the specific truth in the word of God that relates to what you have experienced. Then you look for the path of practice that is right for you in that truth; in this way you can gain an indirect understanding of God's intentions"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself III). From God's words, I understood that when encountering things that don't align with my notions, I have to maintain a heart that fears God, and submit first and not complain against God, and that I need to see which aspect of the truth principles this matter relates to, and seek the truth from it to understand God's intentions. I started to reflect on myself. When I heard about Chen Xia being expelled, I didn't seek the truth at all. I thought that since she'd sacrificed her family and career to do her duties and put so much effort into God's words, and even served as a leader and worker, she was a person who pursued the truth, and so I felt wronged on her behalf,

and I harbored complaints and misunderstandings toward God, and lost interest in my duties. I realized that I didn't have a heart that fears God at all, and that when faced with matters that didn't align with my notions, I resisted and complained, and didn't seek the truth at all. My state was so dangerous! Later, I heard that while cooperating on the task of organizing materials for clearing people out, she'd often bribe the brothers and sisters with small favors to compete against the team leader for status, and that she also sowed discord to make the brothers and sisters form negative views about the team leader. She'd often say in front of everyone that the team leader lacked life entry, couldn't discern people, and didn't have the work of the Holy Spirit, saying these things to undermine the team leader. She frequently exaggerated the brothers' and sisters' revelations of corruption to criticize them which dampened everyone's enthusiasm for their duties. The leaders and the brothers and sisters fellowshipped with her multiple times to help, but she didn't know herself at all and insisted on defending her actions. After hearing about her behaviors, I realized that Chen Xia had issues, and I recalled her behavior from when I was cooperating with her. During the church elections in 2012, both Chen Xia and Sister Wang Hui were elected as leaders. Although Wang Hui had a slightly poorer caliber, she had a sense of burden for her duties and was able to resolve some issues. However, Chen Xia always wanted to get another sister elected because that sister listened to her more. To achieve this goal, Chen Xia seized on Wang Hui's shortcomings and made a big deal out of them, belittling Wang Hui in front of the brothers and sisters by saying she was unfit to be a leader because of her poor caliber. She even told Wang Hui to resign due to her lack of caliber to her face. When Chen Xia saw that Wang Hui hadn't resigned, she began to stir up trouble in front of the brothers and sisters, saying that Wang Hui was too attached to her position, and that she

was reluctant to give it up even in spite of her lack of caliber. Some brothers and sisters were misled by Chen Xia and sided with her, claiming Wang Hui was unfit for leadership and calling for another election. This created chaos in the church, and Wang Hui was left in a negative state. Also, during Chen Xia's time as a leader in 2013, a brother noticed that the leadership acted against the principles while doing their duties and made a suggestion, but when Chen Xia learned of this, she told her partnered sister that they should keep an eye on him and record everything he said, as this would serve as evidence when organizing materials to clear him out later. Chen Xia even condemned this brother for judging the leadership and disturbing the church's work. The brothers and sisters were afraid to offer suggestions to the leaders after hearing this, as they were afraid that they might be condemned and expelled. Later, Chen Xia was dismissed because she competed for fame and gain, and carried out work without consulting her co-workers, frequently dismissing her co-workers' suggestions and acting under her own authority, which had harmed the church's work.

Comparing the many behaviors of Chen Xia, I kept seeking in the words of God. I read God's words: **“How do antichrists exclude and attack those who pursue the truth? They often use methods that others see as reasonable and proper, even using debates about the truth to gain leverage, in order to attack, condemn, and mislead other people. For example, an antichrist thinks that if their partners are people who pursue the truth, they can threaten their status, and thus the antichrist will deliver lofty sermons and discuss spiritual theories to mislead people and make people think highly of them. That way they can belittle and suppress their partners and co-workers, and make people feel that although the partners of their leader are people who pursue the truth, they are not their leader's equal in terms of caliber and**

ability. Some people even say, ‘Our leader’s sermons are lofty, and no one can compare.’ For an antichrist, hearing that kind of comment is extremely satisfying. They think to themselves, ‘You’re my partner, don’t you have some truth realities? Why can’t you speak with the eloquence and elevation that I do? You are thoroughly humiliated now. You lack the ability, yet you dare contend with me!’ That is what the antichrist is thinking. What is the antichrist’s goal? They’re trying every means possible to suppress, belittle, and put themselves above other people. ... Those whom an antichrist hates most in the church are people who pursue the truth, especially those with a sense of justice who would dare expose and report a false leader and antichrist. An antichrist views such people as needles in their eyes, as thorns in their side. If they happen to see someone who pursues the truth and willingly performs their duty, spitefulness and enmity arise in their heart, without the least measure of love. An antichrist won’t just not help or support people who pursue the truth, regardless of their difficulties or of how weak and negative they may be—they won’t just brush it aside. Instead, they’ll secretly be happy about it. And if someone had made accusations against them or exposed them, they’ll take the opportunity to kick them when they’re down, charging them with all manner of offenses to teach them a lesson, to condemn them, to leave them with no way forward, and ultimately, to make them so negative that they can’t perform their duty. The antichrist gets proud of themselves then and begins to exult in that person’s misfortune. This sort of thing is what antichrists are best at; excluding, attacking, and condemning those who pursue the truth is their greatest expertise. ... In summary, based on these manifestations of antichrists, we may determine that they are not performing the duty of leadership, because they are not leading people

in eating and drinking God's words or fellowshiping about the truth, and they are not watering or sustaining people, allowing them to obtain the truth. Instead, they disrupt and disturb church life, dismantle and destroy the work of the church, and impede people on the path of pursuing the truth and obtaining salvation. They want to lead God's chosen people astray and cause them to lose the chance to be granted salvation. This is the ultimate goal that antichrists want to achieve by disrupting and disturbing the work of the church'' (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing

Antichrists. Item Three: They Exclude and Attack Those Who Pursue the Truth). God exposes that antichrists seek to rule in the church, using doctrines and words to mislead those who lack discernment, and that they will stop at nothing to attack and exclude those who pursue the truth. They even hate those who offer them suggestions. They treat these people as obstacles, seizing upon their shortcomings and revelations of corruption and exaggerating these things, intentionally belittling and judging them and labeling them unfairly. This causes these brothers and sisters to become marginalized and suppressed, until they ultimately become so negative that they can't do their duties. In this, the antichrists' goals are achieved, allowing them to wield power in the church as they please. Chen Xia was behaving just like this. She sought to rule in the church, deliberately seizing on Wang Hui's shortcomings to belittle, judge, and attack her, in an attempt to make her resign in shame, misleading the brothers and sisters to side with her against Wang Hui in her attempts to do so. When Chen Xia served as a church leader, if anyone made suggestions that affected her position, she would find ways to torment them, labeling them with unfair accusations in her attempts to clear them out. After being reassigned to her new duty, in order to replace the team leader, she often seized on the team leader's revelations of corruption to belittle, judge, and attack her, misleading people to take her

side to isolate the team leader. This severely disturbed the work. Seeing Chen Xia's ruthless ambition for status, I saw just how insidious, cunning, and malicious her words and actions really were. The leaders dissected the essence of her actions and the consequences they had brought about, yet she had refused to accept this and just kept arguing back and justifying herself. This wasn't just a personal dispute; rather, in this she was doing evil and resisting God, and was opposing God to the very end! I realized that Chen Xia's problems were serious, and that she was an antichrist who had disturbed the church's work. Realizing this, I felt very distressed. I saw just how foolish and blind I'd been, and how I'd been so muddle-headed and lacking in discernment, I'd actually stood up for this antichrist, and my living in a state of negativity and misunderstanding had delayed my duties. I prayed to God for repentance and reported Chen Xia's evil deeds to the church. In the end, based on the principles, everyone determined that Chen Xia was an antichrist, and expelled her from the church.

Later, I often reflected on this matter, wondering, "I've interacted with Chen Xia for so many years, so how could I have been completely lacking in discernment about her? I even thought she was a person who pursued the truth and I held her in high regard and worshiped her." In my seeking, I read two passages of God's words from which I found the reason behind this. Almighty God says: **"Some people are able to bear hardships, can pay the price, are outwardly very well-behaved, are quite well-respected, and enjoy the admiration of others. Would you say that this kind of outward behavior can be regarded as putting the truth into practice? Could one determine that such people are satisfying God's intentions? Why is it that time and time again people see such individuals and think that they are satisfying God, walking the path of putting the truth into practice, and following God's way? Why do some people think this**

way? There is only one explanation for it. What explanation is that? It is that for a great many people, certain questions—such as what it means to put the truth into practice, what it means to satisfy God, and what it means to genuinely possess the truth reality—are not very clear. Thus, there are some people who are often misled by those who outwardly seem spiritual, noble, lofty, and great. As for people who can speak eloquently of words and doctrines, and whose speech and actions seem worthy of admiration, those who are deceived by them have never looked at the essence of their actions, the principles behind their deeds, or what their goals are. Moreover, they have never looked at whether these people truly submit to God, nor have they ever determined whether or not these people genuinely fear God and shun evil. They have never discerned the humanity essence of these people. Rather, beginning with the first step of getting acquainted with them, they have, little by little, come to admire and venerate these people, and in the end, these people become their idols. Furthermore, in some people's minds, the idols whom they worship—and who they believe can abandon their families and jobs, and who seem superficially able to pay the price—are the ones who are truly satisfying God and who can really attain good outcomes and good destinations. In their minds, these idols are the ones whom God praises" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God's Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). **"What is the difference between the effort antichrists put into God's words and the effort of those who pursue the truth?** (The intention and purpose are different. Antichrists put effort into God's words for their own benefit and status, to satisfy their personal ambitions.) **What effort do antichrists put into God's words?** They memorize parts of God's words that accord with their notions, learn to explain God's words using human language,

and write some spiritual notes and insights. They also distill, summarize, and organize God's various statements, such as those people believe are relatively aligned with human notions, those that are easily perceived as having God's speaking tone, some words about mysteries, and some of God's words that are popular and often preached in the church for a time. Besides memorizing, organizing, summarizing, and writing insights, of course, there are more, including some peculiar activities. Antichrists will pay any price to gain status, satisfy their ambition, and achieve their goal of controlling the church and being god. They often work late into the night and wake at the crack of dawn, burning the midnight oil and rehearsing their sermons in the wee hours, and they also note down the brilliant things others have said, all in order to equip themselves with the doctrine they need to give lofty sermons. They ponder every day about how to deliver these lofty sermons, contemplating which of God's words will be the most useful to choose, and will inspire admiration and praise among God's chosen people, and then they learn those words by heart. Then, they consider how to interpret those words in a way that demonstrates their sagacity and brilliance. In order to really impress God's word upon their hearts, they strive to listen to His word several times more. They do all this with the efforts like those of students vying for a spot in college. When someone gives a good sermon, or one that provides some illumination, or one that provides some theory, an antichrist will collect and compile it and make it into their own sermon. No amount of effort is too great for an antichrist. What, then, is the motive and intention behind this effort of theirs? It is to be able to preach God's words, to say them clearly and with ease, to have fluent command of them, so that others may see the antichrist is more spiritual than them, more

treasuring of God's words, more loving of God. In this way, an antichrist can gain the admiration and worship of some of the people around them. An antichrist feels this is a worthwhile thing to do and worth any effort, price, or hardship" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part Seven)). After reading God's words, I realized that I'd regarded Chen Xia highly and thought she pursued the truth because I held an erroneous viewpoint. I viewed those who made sacrifices, expended themselves, and worked hard, and those who put in a lot of effort into reading God's words, as people who had realities and who truly pursued the truth. Now I understood that merely doing one's duties, making sacrifices, expending oneself, suffering, and paying a price are just good behaviors, and that they don't mean that a person truly pursues or practices the truth. I also realized that putting in a lot of effort in reading God's words doesn't necessarily mean that a person cherishes God's words or loves the truth. This should be assessed based on a person's intentions in their actions, whether they practice God's words, and whether their life disposition has changed. After finding God, Chen Xia did her duties in the church and was able to endure hardships, but her sacrifices and expenditures weren't to practice the truth to satisfy God, rather, she pursued reputation and status to gain the admiration and worship of others. In the bitter winter, Chen Xia would get up before dawn to read God's words, sometimes even staying up late to read, copy, and memorize God's words. She put so much effort into God's words, but her underlying motivation was still for the sake of her position. She used God's words as a tool to gain reputation and status, using opportunities to share God's words to garner the admiration and worship of the brothers and sisters. She read so many of God's words, but she showed no signs of practicing them or addressing her corrupt disposition. Instead,

she always pursued reputation and status, often taking a high-handed approach to lecture and constrain others. When others pointed out her issues, she wouldn't accept what they'd say and would try to suppress and torment them. It was apparent that she didn't read God's words to practice the truth, otherwise, how could she have read so many of God's words without any change in her disposition? Instead, she became increasingly arrogant and her pursuit of reputation and status grew more intense. This fully revealed Chen Xia's essence of aversion to and hatred of the truth. Those who truly love the truth cherish and practice God's words. Just like Peter, he frequently pondered God's words and integrated them into his real life, and he was able to strictly practice and enter in accordance with God's words in the things he encountered, and ultimately, his life disposition changed. From this, I saw that to assess whether someone is a person who pursues the truth, we can't just look at their outward sacrifices and expenditures, how much of God's words they've read, or whether they're able to fellowship with others, and that we should mainly focus on whether they can practice God's words in the situations they face, focus on seeking the truth, reflecting on and knowing themselves, and whether they have any life entry. I only saw Chen Xia's apparent ability to make sacrifices, expend herself, and put in effort in reading God's words, and so I worshiped her, even idolizing her in my heart. When I heard about her expulsion from the church, I wanted to speak up for her. I saw that I didn't understand the truth and had failed to assess people according to God's words. I had been so foolish!

I also asked myself, "Why was it, that upon hearing that Chen Xia was to be expelled, I felt so negative and weak, and even stopped wanting to do my duties?" Later, I read God's words: **"Once people's notions and imaginings become the principles and criteria by which they view**

people and things and comport themselves and act, then no matter how they believe in God, or how they pursue, and no matter how much hardship they suffer and how much of a price they pay, it will all be futile. As long as someone lives by their notions and imaginings, then this person is resisting God and is hostile to Him; they do not have true submission to the environments arranged by God or to His requirements, and ultimately their outcome will be a very tragic one. If you have believed in God for many years, and have expended yourself for Him, running all about and paying a great price, but the starting point and root cause of everything you do is your own notions and imaginings, then you do not truly accept and submit to God. ... It's just like what was manifested by Paul; he did a lot of work and a lot of running around, preaching the gospel throughout the greater part of Europe, but no matter how much hardship he suffered and how much of a price he paid, or however much running around he did, he never had thoughts and views that accorded with the truth, he never accepted the truth, and he never had the attitude and real experience of submission to God—he always lived within his own notions and imaginings. What was his specific notion and imagining? It was that when he had finished running the course and fighting the good fight, there was a crown of righteousness in store for him—this was Paul's notion and imagining. What was the specific theoretical basis of his notion and imagining? That God would determine a person's outcome based on the amount of running about they have done, the price they have paid, and how much hardship they have suffered. It was on just such a theoretical basis of his notion and imagining that Paul unknowingly embarked upon the path of antichrists. As a result, when he had reached the end of the road, he had no understanding

whatsoever about his behavior and manifestations of resisting God or his essence of resisting God, much less any repentance. He still held on to his original notion and imagining while believing in God, and not only did he not have the slightest true submission to God, but on the contrary, he believed that he was even more entitled to receive a good outcome and destination from God in exchange. ‘In exchange’ is a nice-sounding, civilized way of putting it, but in fact it was not an exchange, or even a transaction—he was directly asking God for these things, downright demanding them from God. How did he demand them from God? Just like he said, ‘I have finished my course, I have fought the good fight—the crown of glory is now mine. This is what I deserve and what God should rightfully give me.’ The path Paul took was a path of resistance to God, which led him to destruction, and the ultimate outcome that befell him was being punished. This was inseparable from his notion and imagining about God” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth

II. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). I felt negative when I heard that the church had expelled Chen Xia, because I held a fallacious viewpoint. I thought that those who expend themselves and sacrifice a lot and work hard, are to receive a good outcome and destination from God. So when I saw that even though Chen Xia had made sacrifices and suffered, and even after many years of doing her duty, she was still ultimately expelled by the church, I just couldn’t understand it. I also thought about how I hadn’t sacrificed as much as her, and that I hadn’t done as many duties as she had, so I felt that sooner or later I would be eliminated too, and I became so negative that I no longer wanted to pay a price or expend myself. I realized that after all these years of believing in God, I was still living in human notions and imaginings. God determines a person’s outcome not based on how long they have believed, how much doctrine they can preach, how much work

they have done, how much they have suffered, or how much of God's word they have memorized, but rather on whether they pursue the truth, on whether their corrupt disposition has changed, and on whether their intention in their duties and suffering is to satisfy God. If one doesn't practice God's words at all and only does their duties to try and bargain with God, then even if such a person can make sacrifices, expend themselves, and work hard, in the end, if their life disposition doesn't change at all, and they openly resist God, they will offend God's disposition. Just like Paul, he paid a great price and expended himself so much, but he didn't do it to gain the truth or to achieve a change in his disposition, but rather to gain blessings and a crown. Therefore, even after many years of work, his arrogant, conceited, and profit-seeking nature didn't change at all, and in the end, he even used his hard work as capital to demand a righteous crown from God, openly railing against Him. This offended God's disposition and led to Paul's punishment. I too wanted to exchange my suffering and expenditure for a good destination, and when I saw that I had no hope of blessings, I didn't even want to do my duties. Weren't my views on pursuit the same as Paul's? It is perfectly justified and natural for created beings to do their duties. I didn't stand in my position as a created being to do my duties earnestly. Instead, I wanted to use my suffering and expenditure in my duties to obtain a good outcome and destination, and when I felt I couldn't get these things, I thought God was unrighteous. In this, I was resisting God and offending His disposition. This problem was too serious in nature. If I didn't change my viewpoint, I would also be eliminated by God! Understanding this made me feel deeply regretful and guilty, and I wanted to repent to God.

Later, I read God's words: **"As a created being, man should seek to fulfill the duty of a created being, and seek to love God without making**

other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. If what you seek is the blessings of the flesh, and what you put into practice is the truth of your own notions, and if there is no change in your disposition, and you are not at all submissive to God in the flesh, and you still live in vagueness, then what you seek will surely take you to hell, for the path that you walk is the path of failure. Whether you will be made perfect or eliminated depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks).

I thought back to when I believed in God just to seek blessings. In simple terms, I was pursuing personal gain and a good destination, and in the end, I wouldn't gain any truth, and my disposition wouldn't change, so I would still be eliminated by God. Now I see that the path I was pursuing before was wrong, and that the correct path in believing in God is to seek to love God, to do the duties of a created being, to pursue the truth in my duties, and to cast off my corrupt disposition. This is valuable and meaningful. This is just like the path Peter took. He focused on putting God's words into practice in all things, and he accepted God's judgment and chastisement, gained an understanding of his corrupt disposition, and in the end, he lived out the reality of loving God. Reflecting on this, I understood that whether or not one ultimately receives blessings shouldn't be the goal of believing in God, and that understanding the truth and casting off one's corruption in one's duties is the most meaningful and is the correct path. This experience has made me realize

that it is extremely important to view people and matters based on the truth principles!

44. Lessons Learned Through Partnership

By Lu Qiming, China

I've been doing my duty of recording hymns at the church, and the quality of the recorded hymns has been quite good. The brothers and sisters generally praised my work. More than ten years passed by quickly, I noticed that many of the hymns they listened to were recorded by me, which made me feel proud. Later on, the church arranged for Brother Li Ming to work with me. He was very interested in recording hymns and knew about some skills. In the beginning, I was enthusiastic about working with Li Ming, and we got along well. I tried to teach him the recording techniques I got. After Li Ming learned some new recording techniques, he suggested that using these new methods would produce better results, and the church leaders also agreed with him to give it a try. I thought, "I've been doing this recording duty for many years and I have some understanding of the techniques you're talking about. Even I found the new techniques quite challenging, you just came here for a few days and wanted to use new techniques for recording? Aren't you being too arrogant? Moreover, these new techniques are complicated and not something that can be mastered quickly. I think you're just wasting your time." I didn't take this matter seriously. After Li Ming fumbled about with the new methods for several days, the initial recordings weren't very good, and the brothers and sisters also felt that the results were not satisfactory. I then thought that these new techniques weren't effective and continued to use the previous methods for recording.

To my surprise, after some time, the hymns Li Ming recorded using the new techniques improved a lot. This created within me a sense of crisis, and I thought to myself, "Li Ming's recording methods do have their merits.

Although it will be somewhat challenging at first, they produce better results for recording hymns, and most of the brothers and sisters approve of them. Moreover, Li Ming's skills in this area are improving rapidly. If he trains at it for some time and masters these techniques, won't everyone start looking up to him and focusing on him? Then I will no longer have status in people's minds, and I won't be able to make my presence felt anymore! Besides, won't the brothers and sisters say that I've been recording hymns the same old way for so many years without making any progress, while Li Ming has been here for less than two months and has already innovated, producing better results than I have? They'll think Li Ming is more capable! And they'll look down on me, surely? What will become of my reputation then? I've been doing this recording duty for many years; I can't let Li Ming surpass me so rapidly. I can't accept this. Whatever happens, I can't let him outshine me." To avoid being outdone by Li Ming, I started getting up early and staying up late to study the previous techniques. When the recordings improved and gained the approval of most of the brothers and sisters, I felt more at ease, thinking, "This time, I've shown the brothers and sisters that I'm still better than you; you're not good enough, so just give up." But later, I saw that Li Ming was still studying the new techniques, which made me fairly nervous. I worried that if he succeeded, he would replace me, so I thought, "I hope you don't make progress; it's better if your research fails! That way, I can maintain my standing and won't be looked down upon." I was constantly worried about being replaced by Li Ming, so in my mind I started to develop an estrangement from him and a prejudice toward him, viewing him more and more unfavorably, and my attitude toward him became colder. Sometimes, seeing Li Ming talking enthusiastically and joyfully about his new techniques would make me angrily think, "Now you're in the spotlight again!" Later, when I saw that

Li Ming needed help with his research on the new techniques, I didn't want to get involved, eagerly hoping that he would fail. Sometimes I felt a tinge of self-reproach, thinking, "I'm not cooperating with him at all; isn't this just watching on idly while he struggles?" But this little bit of conscience was quickly suppressed by my corrupt disposition. Eventually, to make Li Ming give up on his research of the new techniques, I started making excuses, deliberately saying things like, "The work of recording hymns is getting quite urgent right now, and your research on the new techniques is taking up too much time. Maybe you should stop." However, he wasn't influenced by my words and continued with his meticulous research.

One day, Li Ming revealed an arrogant disposition, insisted on his own way, and was pruned. I was secretly pleased, thinking, "See, this is what happens when you show off! You've only been here for a few days, and just because you know a bit, you think you can come here and make a big splash, showing how brilliant you are. Now that you've been pruned, you'll calm down!" During that time, I found Li Ming increasingly unpleasant. When we worked together on our duties, we hardly spoke, and when we did, it was only out of necessity. There was a significant emotional distance between us. I realized that I was caught up in seeking fame and status, but I couldn't let go of it. The emotional turmoil I experienced at that time was indescribable—every day, I felt exhausted, my spirit was uneasy, and I was especially fatigued. Because of our lack of harmonious cooperation, the effects of the hymns we recorded were poor, which also affected the progress of our work. Facing these results caused me great distress, but I felt stuck and didn't know how to change the situation. During that period, a passage of God's words often came to my mind: **"If in life you do not suffer for the truth or seek to gain it, can it be that you wish to feel regret in your dying hour? If so, then why believe in God? ... What can**

you gain by living for the sake of your flesh and struggling for profit and fame?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Ought to Live for the Truth Since You Believe in God). I repeatedly pondered on God’s words and thought, “Indeed, why have I believed in God for so many years? Is it just to compete for fame and gain with my brother? What can I ultimately gain from believing in God this way? During this time, I have been competing for fame and gain with my brother, falling into darkness and losing the work of the Holy Spirit, resulting in pain and torment. This is God’s detestation and hatred toward me. What is the point of doing my duty in this manner?” I prayed to God, saying, “God, I’ve been living in the pursuit of fame and gain, and it has been so painful. Please lead me out of this state, so that I can work harmoniously with my brother, with one heart and mind, to fulfill our duties well.”

Later, I came across a passage of God’s words: **“Every one of you has risen to the pinnacle of the multitudes; you have ascended to be the ancestors of the masses. You are extremely arbitrary, and you run amok among all of the maggots, seeking a place of ease and attempting to devour the maggots that are smaller than you. You are malicious and sinister in your hearts, surpassing even the ghosts that have sunk to the bottom of the sea. You reside in the bottom of the dung, disturbing the maggots from top to bottom until they have no peace, fighting each other for a while and then calming down. You do not know your place, yet still you battle with each other in the dung. What can you gain from such struggle? If you truly had hearts of fear for Me, how could you fight with each other behind My back? No matter how high your status, are you not still a stinking little worm in the dung? Will you be able to sprout wings and become a dove in the sky?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. When Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots, You Will Regret All the

Evil You Have Done). After reading God's words, I gained some insight into myself. Previously, I believed that I had done my duty of recording hymns for so many years that I possessed a special aptitude and was unique. I had thought highly of myself, believing that my scant skills and abilities deserved admiration from others, and I had always appreciated myself and held myself in high regard. When Li Ming had started working with me, I initially hadn't thought highly of him. But when he had made some progress with the new techniques and gained approval from the brothers and sisters, I had begun to worry that he might surpass me in the future. To maintain my status in the minds of the brothers and sisters, I had started seeing Li Ming as a rival and secretly competed with him. Despite knowing that the old recording techniques I was using had limited potential for improvement, I had been unwilling to let go of myself and learn the new techniques. Later, when I had seen that Li Ming was becoming increasingly proficient with the new techniques and that some brothers and sisters also approved of their use, I had felt threatened that I might be replaced and had started viewing him unfavorably in every regard, eagerly hoping that he would fail in his research. When he had been pruned, I had taken pleasure in it, reveling in his misfortune. Also, whenever he had encountered difficulties, I hadn't offered to help and had even tried to stifle his positivity toward his research by making cynical remarks, hoping that he would give up, which would secure my standing. I had focused on competing for fame and gain, worried only about maintaining my status and not being replaced. In fact, no matter how many special talents a person possesses, or how great their ability is, in God's eyes, they are just a small created being with nothing to boast about or be arrogant about. And yet, with my minuscule bit of skill, I had become conceited, thinking I was different from others, and

always seeking a position in people's hearts to enjoy their admiration. How arrogant and unreasonable I had been!

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. People act for the sake of their families, sons and daughters, for their careers, future prospects, position, vainglory, and money, for the sake of food, clothing, and the flesh. But is there anyone whose actions are truly for the sake of God? Even among those who act for the sake of God, there are but few who know God. How many people do not act out of their own interests? How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Evil Will Surely Be Punished). God's words pierced my heart like a sharp sword. In His words of judgment and chastisement, I saw how, for the sake of protecting my status, I had neglected the interests of the church, suppressed and ostracized Li Ming, and engaged in scheming and competition for fame and gain, without any place for God in my heart. Reflecting on when Li Ming had just arrived, I was still able to help him with love and get along with him harmoniously. But later, having seen him working on the new techniques, I had feared he would surpass me and that I would lose the status I had gained in the minds of the brothers and sisters over the years. This had made me resent and ostracize him, eagerly hoping that he would fail in his research. I had also avoided talking to him, even trying every possible means to trip him up, and dampening his enthusiasm. My nature was truly malicious! Recording hymns greatly edifies the lives of the brothers and sisters and is important for spreading the gospel and bearing witness to

God. The old recording techniques I had been using had already become outdated, and using new techniques could yield better results in recording the hymns, which would benefit the gospel work. Since I had not found a better solution, I should have cooperated harmoniously with Li Ming in researching the new techniques together with one mind. However, I had not considered the interests of God's house and had even undermined such crucial work to protect my reputation and status. This showed that I had not one ounce of humanity, and not one ounce of conscience or reason—I had been utterly selfish! By constantly competing and scheming against Li Ming, I had disturbed the hymn recording work, blinded by my pursuit of fame, gain, and status, and had done things that resisted God. I had turned the place where I did my duty into a battlefield, and my duty into a tool to secure my status and livelihood. This truly was detested and abhorred by God! I thought of Paul, who had also competed for fame and gain. When God entrusted Peter with the responsibility of shepherding the churches, and the brothers and sisters really respected and supported Peter, Paul became jealous, deliberately belittling Peter and testifying to himself. Paul gained people's worship and admiration, fulfilling his desire for fame and status, but he was on the wrong path, leading people to himself, and was ultimately eliminated and punished by God. My view toward pursuit, and the path I was following were the same as Paul's, and if I carried on like this without repenting, I would also face the same punishment! If I still clung on tightly to reputation and status, that would be utterly foolish and pitiful!

Later, I read more of God's words: **“Since the beginning of His work throughout the universe, God has predestined many people to serve Him, including those from every walk of life. His purpose is to satisfy His intentions and bring His work on earth to smooth completion; this**

is God's aim in choosing people to serve Him. Every person who serves God must understand His intention. This work of His makes God's wisdom and omnipotence, and the principles of His work on earth, more evident to people" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Religious Service Must Be Purged). From God's words, I understood that God selects people from all walks of life to spread His gospel work, and people's gifts and talents are from God. God appoints people to certain duties and gives them the corresponding talents, so they can effectively utilize their specialties in doing their duties, which benefits the work of God's house. Li Ming had a talent for researching new techniques, while I had some technical experience. It was God's sovereignty and arrangement that we could do duties together, and He wanted us to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses and cooperate harmoniously to fulfill our duties well. This was God's intention. Recognizing this, I no longer wanted to live in my corrupt disposition. As Li Ming's skills improved, I noticed that the results of using the new techniques for recording were increasingly better, and I acknowledged that adopting these new methods was more beneficial for the work of God's house. I was willing to put aside my pride and learn from Li Ming. However, I also thought, "I've been doing this duty for many years, and the brothers and sisters regard me highly. But Li Ming, who just got here, made breakthroughs in technique. If I now humble myself to learn from him, what would the brothers and sisters think of me? It would be so embarrassing!" This thought made me feel very awkward, and I found it hard to let go of my ego, realizing that I was too attached to my status. Reflecting on how Christ came to earth in humility and hiddenness and never elevated Himself by His status, or showed off. I realized that my little bit of skill and achievement made me too proud, seeking admiration from others. I had no self-awareness and was too arrogant. The skills and talents I

possessed were given by God, and there was nothing for me to boast about. If I was unwilling to humble myself and learn from the brother, I wouldn't improve technically, either. So, I prayed to God, "God, I am willing to put aside my pride and status to learn from Li Ming. Please give me the strength to be open and cooperate harmoniously with the brother."

One day, it was just Li Ming and me in the recording studio, and I took the initiative to openly share my state with him. I talked about how I had been competing with him for fame and gain. Li Ming also shared his own state with me. After we talked, the barrier in my heart disappeared, and I felt much more relieved, as if a wall that had been between us was gone. I also read two passages of God's words, which gave me some practical guidance on how to cooperate harmoniously in doing our duties in the future. Almighty God says: **"Whether you are a younger or an older brother or sister, you know the function you ought to perform. Those in their youth are not arrogant; those who are older are not negative, nor do they regress. Moreover, they are able to use each other's strengths to make up for their weaknesses, and they can serve one another without any prejudice. A bridge of friendship is built between younger and older brothers and sisters, and because of God's love, you are able to better understand one another. Younger brothers and sisters do not look down on older brothers and sisters, and the older brothers and sisters are not self-righteous: Is this not a harmonious partnership? If you all have such resolve, then the will of God will certainly be fulfilled in your generation"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. On Everyone Performing Their Function). **"You must achieve harmonious cooperation for the purpose of the work of God, for the benefit of the church, and so as to spur your brothers and sisters onward. You should coordinate with one another, each amending the other and arriving at a better work**

outcome, so as to show consideration for God's intentions. This is what true cooperation is, and only those who engage in it will gain true entry" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Serve As the Israelites Did). God's intention is for the old not to be self-righteous or cling to outdated things, and for the young not to be arrogant. They should work together harmoniously to fulfill their duties well. Although I had been doing this duty for a long time, I had not made much progress in recording technology. Li Ming was interested in researching new technology and had already made some achievements. He possessed the skills that I lacked, so collaborating with him could make up for my shortcomings and benefit our duties. I must humble myself and learn new techniques from him, working together to fulfill our duties well. After that, I learned and researched new technology together with Li Ming. With God's guidance, our thinking became clearer as we studied skills, and some problems that had previously been difficult to solve were quickly fixed.

Through this period of experience, I deeply felt that living for fame and status was incredibly painful, leading to the darkness in my heart and unspeakable suffering with no way out. I saw how deeply I was corrupted by Satan, with a strong desire for status, and I was too arrogant. At the same time, I also experienced that God's disposition is righteous and holy, and cannot be offended, as God said: **"I appear to the holy kingdom, and hide Myself from the land of filth"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 29). When I lived in the corrupt disposition of striving for fame and gain, God despised me and hid Himself from me, and I lived in darkness, suffering greatly in my soul. However, when I accepted the judgment and chastisement of God's words and was willing to put aside my pride and status to cooperate with Li Ming, I saw the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit. God's words brought me release

and freedom. And I felt from the bottom of my heart, how wonderful it is to practice the truth and live according to God's words!

45. I No Longer Choose My Duties Based on Preference

By Chen Miao, China

In 2006, I accepted God's work of the last days. Since then, I have been serving as a leader and worker in the church. Though I was busy and tired every day, I had no complaints, because I believed that leading and supervising were roles for those who pursued the truth, and that those doing these duties were highly regarded by the brothers and sisters. In 2018, I took on a text-based duty. I was very happy, and felt that I must be doing well, otherwise, I wouldn't have been chosen for such an important duty. A few days later, an upper leader met with me and said, "The church is facing arrests by the CCP; the environment is tense everywhere, and we urgently need people to take on the duty of handling general affairs. We have discussed and would like you and your husband to take on this duty." Hearing the leader's words, my head felt like it was buzzing. I could hardly believe my ears, thinking, "How could they assign me to handle general affairs? Has the leader made a mistake? Isn't handling general affairs just hard labor? How lowly is this duty! What will the brothers and sisters think of me if they find out?" The more I thought about it, the more resistant I felt, and I wanted to tell the leader that I didn't want to take on this duty, but considering the church's arrangement was based on work needs, I had no choice but to reluctantly agree. On the way home, my mind was in turmoil: "Since believing in God, I have always served as a leader and worker, or performed the text-based duty, and both of those duties sound more prestigious than the general affairs duty. Having to do that heavy, dirty and tiring work is nowhere near as prestigious as the text-based duty I'm currently doing, and if the sisters in the team know, won't they surely look

down on me, saying that I must not be pursuing the truth to end up with this duty?” When I got home, I lay on the bed feeling weak and powerless, but I put on a forced smile when facing the sisters, afraid to openly fellowship about my state, fearing that they might look down on me when they found out I was doing the duty of handling general affairs.

A few days later, my husband and I officially took on the duty of handling general affairs. In the first few days, we helped brothers and sisters who were in danger move to new houses. My husband and I would wake up at around three in the morning to help with the moves, running up and down stairs, and each day we were exhausted, with sore backs and aching waists, and when we got home at night, I didn’t even want to eat, too weak to even get up from bed. After a week of doing this work from dawn till dusk, I began to complain, “This is just hard labor. In the world, these jobs are done by those without knowledge, learning, or skills, and I never thought I’d fall to this level after all these years of believing in God, only able to do the most inconspicuous, labor-intensive tasks. I used to do the text-based work, sitting in front of a computer, wearing clean clothes and sheltered from the wind and rain, but now I’m sweating all over and exhausted every day! It’s like night and day!” I did my duty with resignation each day, with my state having fallen so low, feeling dazed like a walking corpse, with great inner torment.

In my pain, I came before God and prayed, “Oh God, the leaders arranged for me to handle general affairs, but I can’t submit. I feel that this duty is lowly and that it would make people look down on me. I don’t understand Your intention. Please enlighten and guide me to learn a lesson from this.” After praying, I read two passages of God’s words: **“Some people often feel superior in the house of God. In what ways? What causes them to feel superior in these ways? For example, some people**

know how to speak a foreign language, and they think it means they have a gift and are skilled, and that if the house of God did not have them, it would probably be really difficult to expand its work. As a result, they want to make people look up to them everywhere they go. What method do people of this type employ when they meet others? In their heart, they assign all sorts of different ranks to people who perform different duties in the house of God. The leaders are at the top, people who have special talents come second, then come people who have average talents, and at the bottom are those who perform all sorts of supporting duties. Some people treat the ability to perform important duties and special duties as capital, and treat it as having truth realities. What is the problem here? Isn't this absurd? Performing some special duties makes them arrogant and haughty, and they look down on everyone. When they meet someone, the first thing they always do is ask what duty they perform. If the person performs an average duty, they look down on them, and think this person isn't worthy of their attention. When this person wants to fellowship with them, they are agreeable to it on the surface, but inside they think, 'You want to fellowship with me? You're just a nobody. Look at the duty you perform—how are you worthy of talking to me?' If the duty the person performs is more important than theirs, they flatter them and envy them. When they see leaders or workers, they are obsequious and flatter them. Are they principled in the way they treat people? (No. They treat people according to the duty they perform, and according to the various different ranks they assign.) **They rank people according to their experience and seniority, and according to their talents and gifts**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Practice of the Truth Is There Life Entry). **"Whatever your duty, do not discriminate between high and**

low. Suppose you say, ‘Though this task is a commission from God and the work of God’s house, if I do it, people might look down on me. Others get to do work that lets them stand out. I’ve been given this task, which doesn’t let me stand out but makes me exert myself behind the scenes, it’s unfair! I will not do this duty. My duty has to be one that makes me stand out in front of others and allows me to make a name for myself—and even if I don’t make a name for myself or stand out, I still have to benefit from it and feel physically at ease.’ Is this an acceptable attitude? Being picky is not accepting things from God; it is making choices according to your own preferences. This is not accepting your duty; it is a refusal of your duty, a manifestation of your rebelliousness against God. Such pickiness is adulterated with your individual preferences and desires. When you give consideration to your own benefit, your reputation, and so on, your attitude toward your duty is not submissive” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). After reading God’s words, I understood that my perspective on duty was incorrect, and that I’d categorized the duties in God’s house into various levels. I thought that being a leader and worker or a team supervisor in God’s house meant that one was a person with good caliber and a strong pursuit of the truth, and brothers and sisters would hold such people in high regard, while those with the duty of handling general affairs were of poor caliber and lacking understanding of the truth, and doing such a duty was seen as inferior and didn’t let one show off. So I missed the duties I had done before, when brothers and sisters had looked up to me, and I always felt a sense of superiority over others, which made me very motivated in my duty, willing to forsake my family and career, and to suffer and expend myself. Now, when I was assigned the duty of handling general affairs, I felt as if I had

been demoted, and inferior in front of brothers and sisters. Especially when the duty was painful and exhausting, I complained in my heart, and felt that such an arrangement by the leaders was unfair and damaged my integrity, and I just wanted to shirk this responsibility. At this point, I saw that my choice of duty was based on whether it allowed me to show off and benefit myself, and that I didn't consider the church's work at all. After believing in God for many years, I still didn't view matters based on God's words, but rather divided duties into various levels. My perspective was no different from that of a disbeliever. Realizing this, I felt upset and guilty.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"In the house of God, there is constant mention of accepting God's commission and performing one's duty properly. How does duty come into being? To speak broadly, it comes into being as a result of God's management work of bringing salvation to humanity; to speak specifically, as God's management work unfolds among mankind, various work appears that requires people to cooperate and complete it. This has given rise to responsibilities and missions for people to fulfill, and these responsibilities and missions are the duties God bestows upon mankind. In God's house, the various tasks that require people's cooperation are the duties they should perform. So, are there differences between duties in terms of better and worse, lofty and lowly, or great and small? Such differences do not exist; as long as something has to do with God's management work, is a requirement of the work of His house, and is required by spreading God's gospel, then it is a person's duty. This is the origin and definition of duty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **"What attitude should you have toward your duty? First, you must not analyze it, trying to ascertain who it was that assigned it to you; instead, you should accept**

it from God, as a duty entrusted to you by God, and you should obey the orchestration and arrangements of God, and accept your duty from God. Second, do not discriminate between high and low, and do not concern yourself with its nature, whether it lets you stand out or not, whether it is done in public view or behind the scenes. Do not consider these things. There is also another attitude: submission and active cooperation” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?).

After reading God’s words, I suddenly gained some light in my heart, and I understood that in God’s house, there are no distinctions between high or low, noble or humble duties. Regardless of the duty performed, it is all fulfilling one’s role and function, and it is all performing the duty of a created being. The church arranges which person performs what duty based on each person’s stature and caliber, and according to the needs of the church work. Regardless of the duty, it is all done to spread the gospel. The leaders assigned me the duty of handling general affairs, and arranging accommodation for brothers and sisters, organizing their lives properly so that they can do their duties with a peace of mind, which is also necessary for the work. It’s like a machine, every part has its role, and if any part is missing, the machine cannot operate. It is the same in God’s house, every duty is indispensable, and there is no such thing as ranks when it comes to duties. Moreover, whether one possesses the truth reality is not measured by the type of duty performed. Before, when I was doing the duty of a leader and worker, I often fellowshiped with brothers and sisters during gatherings, but when I was transferred into a new duty, I could not submit, and I measured it with a nonbeliever’s perspective, revealing my pitiable lack of truth. God says that any duty related to His management plan is a duty, that there is no distinction between high or low, noble or humble duties, and that all are

responsibilities that one cannot shirk. However, I saw myself as elite, and thought that my being assigned to handle general affairs was a waste of my talents. I was negative, defiant, and even wanted to avoid it. How was I doing my duty? God's essence is so holy and noble, yet He has endured all suffering to become flesh and express the truth, quietly laboring for the salvation of humanity. Reflecting on myself, when I suffered a little physical hardship, I complained endlessly and misunderstood. This attitude of mine toward my duty was simply lacking in humanity and truly hurt God! I felt deeply indebted to God and regretted my rebellious behavior. I could no longer choose my duty based on my own preferences and desires. When I submitted, my mindset toward my duty changed, and I felt less pained and tired in my heart. God's arrangement of situations revealed my incorrect views, and this was God's love and salvation for me.

After doing the duty of handling general affairs for six months, I thought my views had changed, and that I was no longer pursuing status or reputation, but when a situation arose, it revealed me again. One day, the leader came to discuss with me about assigning my husband and me to hosting duties. Considering the previous lack of submission in the duty of handling general affairs had left me with a debt, I knew that I could not be rebellious this time, so I agreed, and we soon rented a house. However, spending our days living with the brothers and sisters and seeing them all doing text-based duties, I felt a bit bitter and unhappy, thinking, "Before, I was also doing my duty at the computer, and now I am crouched in the kitchen every day, prepping vegetables and cooking." I felt so inferior to them. Thinking this, tears welled up in my eyes. One day, the leader came to my home to discuss work with the brothers and sisters, and left without inquiring about my state, which made me feel even more down. I thought back on when I did text-based duties. I was valued by the leaders, but now I

was just dealing with pots and pans all day long, and it seemed that I would never have a chance to stand out. The more I thought about it, the more painful it became, and I felt that life was meaningless. I realized that my state was not right, so I quickly sought God's words to read. I read a passage of God's words: **"Under the driving force of a corrupt satanic disposition, what are people's ideals, hopes, ambitions, and life goals and directions? Do they not run contrary to positive things? For example, people always want to have renown or be celebrities; they wish to gain great fame and prestige, and to bring honor to their ancestors. Are these positive things? These are not at all in line with positive things; moreover, they run counter to the law of God's sovereignty over the fate of mankind. Why would I say that? What kind of person does God want? Does He want a person of greatness, a celebrity, a noble person, or a world-shaking person? (No.) So, then, what kind of person does God want? (Someone with their feet planted firmly on the ground who fulfills the role of a created being.) Yes, and what else? (God wants an honest person who fears Him and shuns evil, and submits to Him.) (Someone who stands with God in all matters, who strives to love God.) Those answers are also correct. It is anyone who is of the same heart and mind as God. Does it say anywhere in God's words that people must keep to their position as humans? (It does.) What does it say? ('As one member of created humanity, a person must keep their own position, and conduct themselves conscientiously. Dutifully guard that which is entrusted to you by the Creator. Do not act out of line, or do things beyond your range of ability or which are loathsome to God. Do not try to be a great person, a superman, or a grand individual, and do not seek to become God. This is how people should not desire to be. Seeking to become great or a superman is absurd. Seeking to become**

God is even more disgraceful; it is disgusting, and despicable. What is commendable, and what created beings should hold to more than anything else, is to become a true created being; this is the only goal that all people should pursue’ (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I.) **Since you know what God’s words require of people, are you able to stick to God’s requirements in your pursuit of human conduct? Do you always want to spread your wings and take flight, do you always wish to fly solo, to be an eagle rather than a little bird? What disposition is this? Is this the principle of human conduct? Your pursuit of human conduct should be based on God’s words; only God’s words are the truth. ... What is it that makes people always wish to be free of God’s sovereignty, and always wish to grab hold of their own fate and plan their own future, and wish to control their prospects, direction, and life goals? Where does this starting point come from? (A corrupt satanic disposition.) What then does a corrupt satanic disposition bring to people? (Opposition to God.) What comes of people opposing God? (Pain.) Pain? It is destruction! Pain isn’t the half of it. What you see right before your eyes is pain, negativity, and weakness, and it is resistance and complaints—what outcome will these things bring? Annihilation! This is no small matter, and it is no game”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. A Corrupt Disposition Can Only Be Resolved by Accepting the Truth). Thinking over God’s words, I realized that the reason I always wanted to do the duty of a leader and worker and pursued the admiration and esteem of others was because I was controlled by my desire for reputation and status. In living by “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark,” “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies,” “Man struggles upward; water flows downward,” “One must endure the greatest hardships in order to become

the greatest of men,” and other such satanic poisons, I had come to mistake fame and prominence, and the pursuit of superiority as positive things, believing that living this way was valuable, and thinking that being looked down upon by others meant living without success and being inferior. I reflected on the time after I got married. Although my husband and I had stable jobs and life was manageable, I was ambitious and unwilling to live an ordinary life. I wanted to improve my life and gain admiration from relatives and colleagues. To achieve this, my husband and I worked side jobs alongside our regular jobs, raising chickens and growing vegetables, and we worked from dawn to dusk every day. As time went on, our lives improved, and relatives and colleagues praised my capability, which made me very happy and feel that my life hadn’t been in vain. After coming to the church, I still pursued reputation and superiority, believing that being a leader and worker or a team supervisor would make the brothers and sisters admire me. When my desire for reputation, gains, and status was satisfied, I could endure any hardship, but when it came to doing duties like handling general affairs or hosting others, I felt it was beneath me, and my heart was filled with resistance and complaints, and I was devoid of submission. I did not consider how to uphold the church’s work, and revealed a satanic disposition of opposing God. Realizing this, I felt very fearful, and came before God in prayer, “Oh God, my views on pursuit have been wrong, and in these years of believing in You, I have not been following the path of pursuing the truth, but rather using my duties to satisfy my own desire for reputation and status, and not sincerely doing my duty as a created being. God, I am willing to repent, and I ask You to guide me to understand the truth and correct my erroneous views on pursuit.” Afterward, I reflected, and realized that doing this duty was beneficial for my life entry. Although I had served as a leader and worker for many years, I had not pursued the

truth, and many of my fallacious views remained unchanged. Being transferred to a different duty forced me to reflect and know myself, which contained God's love and salvation for me. Understanding this, I felt regretful and guilty, and I just wanted to let God orchestrate me as He wishes, and sincerely cooperate with a heart of seeking and submission in any duty.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Everybody is equal before the truth, and there are no distinctions of age or of lowliness and nobleness for those doing their duties in God's house. Everybody is equal before their duty, they just do different jobs. There are no distinctions between them based on who has seniority. Before the truth, everybody should keep a humble, submissive, and accepting heart. People should be possessed of this reason and this attitude"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). **"Ultimately, whether people can attain salvation is not dependent on what duty they do, but on whether they can understand and gain the truth, and on whether they can, in the end, entirely submit to God, put themselves at the mercy of His orchestration, give no consideration to their future and destiny, and become a qualified created being. God is righteous and holy, and these are the standards He uses to measure all mankind. These standards are immutable, and you must remember this"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's words, I saw God's righteous disposition. In God's eyes, we are all created beings and are equal. God does not favor someone just because they are a leader, or look down on someone because they handle general affairs. God expresses the truth, providing for every person, and so long as people thirst for and pursue the truth, everyone has the same opportunity for salvation. God does not determine a person's outcome based on the type of duty they do, but according to their essence and the path they

walk. If a person does not pursue the truth, does not practice God's words, and their disposition does not change, even if they are a leader and worker, they will ultimately be eliminated. At this point, I also understood that no matter how high my status or how many people admire me, these things cannot save me. Only by pursuing the truth and seeking a change in disposition according to God's intention is there an opportunity for salvation. Understanding these things, I felt liberated in my heart, and from then on, I only wished to do my duty well and make up for my debt to God. When doing my duty after this, I no longer focused on how brothers and sisters viewed me, but thought about how to ensure the safety of the house and host the brothers and sisters well, so they could do their duties in peace. In addition, while doing the hosting duty, I focused on reflecting on my thoughts and corruptions revealed in my daily interactions with people, events and things, and I sought God's words to resolve them, paying attention to writing devotional notes, and practicing writing experiential testimony articles, and each day has been quite fulfilling. It is the chastisement and judgment of God's words that corrected my fallacious views, and the change I have today is the result of God's work. Thank God!

46. Persevering in Spreading the Gospel Amidst Tribulation

By Yi Ting, China

In June 2022, the leader said that a church had recently been raided by the CCP, and now their gospel work was not effective, so the leader wanted me to go over as a supervisor. The leader also mentioned that five or six gospel workers had been arrested, and that new personnel needed to be cultivated quickly. I was a bit worried, thinking, “I’m already being hunted by the CCP, and I’ve nearly been captured twice. If I go there and put myself out in the open, will I be monitored and arrested by the police? If I am arrested, tortured, beaten to death, or unable to withstand the police’s coercion and inducements, and betray God, then my journey of faith in God will be completely over.” Thinking this, I didn’t want to agree, but I felt kind of guilty, thinking, “I’ve believed in God for many years, but when it comes down to it, I still always consider my own interests. I am truly rebellious! I can’t keep protecting my own interests.” With this in mind, I submitted and accepted this duty.

After arriving at the church, I learned that the gospel work was ineffective because the gospel workers were all living in a state of timidity. I quickly found some of God’s words to fellowship with the brothers and sisters, helping them understand truths such as God’s authority, that human life and death are in God’s hands, and that spreading the gospel is our mission. After hearing this, everyone’s faith was bolstered, they recognized their selfishness and baseness, felt remorse, and were willing to turn things around and cooperate properly on the gospel work. I felt so grateful to God. After a while, the gospel work improved. But unexpectedly, five months later, some more brothers and sisters were

tracked and arrested. The sister who hosted our gatherings was also interrogated by the police. Then the leader sent a letter saying that the co-workers I had been in contact with recently had all been arrested, and now I was in danger too, and that I should leave quickly. After reading the letter, I was a bit panicked, thinking, “Recently, I have been out with these co-workers almost constantly, spreading the gospel. Now that they’ve all been arrested, if the police check their surveillance records, they will definitely find me. I’ve got to hide! I can’t let the police catch me!” I thought about how the police went to my house every year to inquire about my whereabouts, and about how if I really was caught this time, they definitely wouldn’t let me go. If I couldn’t withstand the torture and coercion and betrayed God, then in the end, not only would my body be punished, but my soul would also go to hell. So, I decided that hiding and protecting myself first were most important. I quickly handed over all the follow-up work to the leader, even though I knew there were potential gospel recipients who needed my preaching and newcomers who needed my watering, I pushed these things to the back of my mind.

Later, I heard that many brothers and sisters were spreading the gospel and doing their duties, and I looked at myself, who, fearing arrest, didn’t dare spread the gospel or testify to God. I asked myself, am I not one of the tares revealed in the great tribulation? The more I thought about it, the more upset I became. I couldn’t eat or sleep, and I pondered, “Why do I believe in God? I am currently living a pathetic life to avoid being arrested by the police, and at a time when the gospel needs to be expanded, I do not step up and lack any testimony. I am truly neglecting my duty!” I read God’s words: **“What I desire is your loyalty and submission now, your love and testimony now. Even if you do not know at this moment what testimony is or what love is, you should bring to Me your all, and turn**

over to Me the only treasures you have: your loyalty and submission. You should know that the testimony to My defeat of Satan lies within the loyalty and submission of man, as does the testimony to My complete conquest of man. The duty of your faith in Me is to bear witness to Me, to be loyal to Me and none other, and to be submissive to the end. Before I begin the next step of My work, how will you bear witness to Me? How will you be loyal and submissive to Me? Do you devote all your loyalty to your function, or will you simply give up? Would you rather submit to My every arrangement (even if it be death or destruction), or flee midway to avoid My chastisement? I chastise you so that you will bear witness to Me, and be loyal and submissive to Me. What's more, the chastisement at present is to unfold the next step of My work and to allow the work to progress unimpeded. Hence, I exhort you to be wise and treat neither your life nor the significance of your existence as worthless sand. Can you know exactly what My work to come will be? Do you know how I will work in the days to come, and how My work will unfold? You should know the significance of your experience of My work, and furthermore, the significance of your faith in Me" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?).

God's words suddenly awakened me. It's true, God wants people's loyalty and submission, and defeating Satan requires people's loyalty as well. But after learning that my co-workers had been arrested, I worried that the police would check the surveillance records and find me, so I hid, considering my own safety, and I cast aside the potential gospel recipients without concern or any sense of responsibility. The calamity had become so great, but some potential gospel recipients had not yet heard God's gospel, and the newcomers had not yet set down roots and were at risk of falling away, but I abandoned them without any concern. I was truly unworthy of

trust. I always said I must be loyal to God, but when faced with the facts, I was revealed. What I said before were lies to deceive God. God wants people who can listen to His words, and those who can be loyal to God at all times, but I abandoned my duty and hid when faced with a little danger, not caring whether the lives of the newcomers would be impacted. I saw that I had no loyalty or testimony in the midst of tribulation and trials. I was such a disappointment to God! I thought of Job, whose vast wealth was taken by robbers in one night, and who became covered in boils, whose wife even urged him to abandon God, yet he preferred to curse himself rather than blame God in such physically and mentally painful trials, and he stood firm in his testimony, ultimately shaming and defeating Satan. I also thought of Abraham, who, with his own hands, raised a knife to kill his son to offer to God, showing absolute submission to God. In comparison, I had neither loyalty nor submission. I had to repent to God, follow the examples of Job and Abraham, and even if I was caught, tortured, and lost my life, I had to stand firm in my testimony and shame Satan. With these things in mind, I gained faith and strength, and quickly wrote to the leader, saying that I could move to another church to spread the gospel.

Later, I went to the Shu Guang Church. But a month later, the great red dragon extended its claws to the Shu Guang Church as well, and arrested a dozen brothers and sisters in one fell swoop. Then I heard that someone had sold us out as a Judas, and that the police had used a sister's photo for the Judas to identify her. I thought about how this sister was often with me, and that if her photo was with the police, wouldn't they have my photo too? If the police tracked her down, I would also be implicated. I also realized that because I wasn't a local, if I was caught, the sentence would be heavier, so I should avoid going out in the open, or else I might be the next to be caught. So, I stopped going to church to cooperate on the gospel work. Later, I

suddenly remembered how last time, because the church co-workers had been arrested, I hid in fear for more than twenty days, delaying the work. If I hid every time there was even the slightest sign of trouble, how could I spread the gospel? Thinking of this, my conscience was filled with guilt. When faced with tribulation, I thought not of how to protect the church's work, but only of my own safety. I had been truly selfish and despicable! Later on, I began to meet with brothers and sisters, to fellowship with them on how to be loyal and fulfill our duties well.

After a period of time, several more churches were raided by the CCP, and the police also started watching the house where we had been gathering. Without a suitable place to gather, we had to meet at improvised locations, either in long-abandoned houses or near cemeteries. One day, when we were meeting in an old house again, a sister hurriedly ran over and said, "This place isn't safe anymore. Yesterday, more than fifty policemen came to search houses, and several houses storing books of God's words were searched. The police are still stopping and inspecting cars on the road!" Hearing this, my heart started pounding like a rabbit's, and I thought, "The CCP has threatened that if they catch believers, they'll beat them to death and die unavenged, so falling into their hands means almost certain death! I've always been hunted by the CCP, so if they catch me, they'll definitely beat me to death." At this thought, I shrank back again and didn't dare spread the gospel. Later, I read the words of God: **"How did those disciples of the Lord Jesus die? Among the disciples, there were those who were stoned, dragged behind a horse, crucified upside down, dismembered by five horses—every sort of death befell them. What was the reason for their deaths? Were they lawfully executed for their crimes? No. They were condemned, beaten, scolded, and put to death because they spread the Lord's gospel and were rejected by the people**

of the world—that is how they were martyred. ... Actually, this was how their bodies died and passed away; this was their means of departure from the human world, yet that did not mean their outcome was the same. No matter what the means of their death and departure was nor how it happened, it was not how God defined the final outcomes of those lives, of those created beings. This is something you must see clearly. On the contrary, they used precisely those means to condemn this world and to testify to God's deeds. These created beings used their most precious lives—they used the last moment of their lives to testify to God's deeds, to testify to God's great power, and to declare to Satan and the world that God's deeds are right, that the Lord Jesus is God, that He is the Lord, and God's incarnate flesh. Even down to the final moment of their lives, they never denied the name of the Lord Jesus. Was this not a form of judgment upon this world? They used their lives to proclaim to the world, to confirm to human beings that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, that the Lord Jesus is Christ, that He is God's incarnate flesh, that the work of redemption He did for all humanity allows humanity to live on—this fact is forever unchanging. Those who were martyred for spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to what extent did they perform their duty? Was it to the ultimate extent? How was the ultimate extent manifested? (They offered their lives.) That's right, they paid the price with their lives. Family, wealth, and the material things of this life are all external things; the only thing that is related to the self is life. To every living person, life is the thing most worthy of being treasured, the most precious thing and, as it happens, these people were able to offer their most precious possession—life—as confirmation of and testimony to God's love for mankind. Until the day they died, they did not deny God's name, nor did they

deny God's work, and they used their last moments of life to testify to the existence of this fact—is this not the highest form of testimony? This is the best way of doing one's duty; this is what it is to fulfill one's responsibility. When Satan threatened and terrorized them, and, in the end, even when it made them pay the price of their lives, they did not abandon their responsibility. This is what it is to fulfill one's duty to the utmost extent. What do I mean by this? Do I mean to have you use the same method to testify of God and to spread His gospel? You do not necessarily need to do so, but you must understand that this is your responsibility, that if God needs you to, you should accept it as **something you are honor-bound to do**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). Reading God's words gave me faith. The destiny of every person is determined by God's sovereignty, and no matter what circumstances I come up against in spreading the gospel, I must uphold my duty as a created being. I thought of the disciples of the Lord Jesus who endured much persecution and tribulation to spread the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and were ultimately martyred for the Lord. Some were crucified, some were dragged to death behind horses, and some were stoned to death, but they never abandoned their mission or responsibilities. Their bodies may have died, but their souls were in God's hands, and the price of their life that they paid to spread the gospel earned God's approval. Then, I recalled the words of the Lord Jesus: **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). My life, death, future, and destiny are all in God's hands. Even if the police capture me and beat me to death, they cannot terminate my soul. The death of the body is not terrifying, what is terrifying is hearing about danger and then hiding away in fear for my life,

not daring to do my duty, and thus losing my testimony by living in such a pathetic way. Living like this, even if I wasn't captured, I would still be eliminated when God's work ends. Understanding this, I was no longer constrained by the fear of death.

One day, I read another passage of God's words: **"Besides considering their own safety, what do certain antichrists also think about? They say, 'Right now, our environment is unfavorable, so let's show our faces less and spread the gospel less. That way, we're less likely to be caught, and the church's work won't be destroyed. If we avoid getting caught, we won't turn Judas, and then we'll be able to remain in the future, won't we?' Aren't there antichrists who use such excuses to mislead their brothers and sisters? ... What principles do they follow? These people say, 'A crafty rabbit has three burrows. In order for a rabbit to guard against a predator's attack, it has to prepare three burrows to hide itself in. If a person encounters danger and has to escape, but they have nowhere to hide, is that acceptable? We must learn from rabbits! God's created animals have this survival ability, and people should learn from them.'**

it. I'll minimize my work as much as possible, avoid going out, avoid interacting with anyone, and ensure that nobody knows I'm a leader. These days, who can afford to care about anyone else? Just staying alive is already a challenge!' Since taking on the role of a leader, apart from carrying a bag and hiding, they don't do any work. They live on tenterhooks, in constant fear of being caught and sentenced. Suppose that they hear someone say, 'If you get caught, you'll be killed! If you weren't a leader, if you were just an ordinary believer, you might be let out after just paying a little fine, but since you're a leader, it's hard to say. It's too dangerous! Some leaders or workers who got caught refused to give up any information and were beaten to death by the police.' Once they hear about someone being beaten to death, their fear intensifies, and they become even more afraid to work. Every day, all they think about is how to avoid getting caught, how to avoid showing their faces, how to avoid being monitored, and how to avoid contact with their brothers and sisters. They rack their brains thinking about these things and completely forget about their duties. Are these loyal people? Can people like this handle any work? (No, they can't.) People like this are just timid, and we can't definitely label them as antichrists based solely on this manifestation, but what is the nature of this manifestation? The essence of this manifestation is that of a disbeliever. They don't believe that God can protect people's safety, and they certainly don't believe that dedicating oneself to expending for God is devoting oneself to the truth, and that it is something God approves of. They don't fear God in their hearts; they are only afraid of Satan and wicked political parties. They don't believe in God's existence, they don't believe that everything is in God's hands, and they certainly don't believe that God will approve of a person expending everything

for His sake, and for the sake of following His way, and completing His commission. They can't see any of this. What do they believe in? They believe that if they fall into the hands of the great red dragon, they'll meet with a bad end, that they could be sentenced or even risk losing their lives. In their hearts, they only consider their own safety and not the work of the church. Aren't these disbelievers? (Yes, they are.) What does the Bible say? 'He that loses his life for My sake shall find it' (Matthew 10:39). Do they believe these words? (No, they don't.) If they are asked to take a risk while doing their duty, they'll wish to hide themselves away and not let anyone see them—they'll want to be invisible. This is the extent to which they are afraid. They don't believe that God is man's support, that everything is in God's hands, that if something really goes wrong or they actually get caught, it's permitted by God, and that people should have hearts of submission. These people don't possess these hearts, this understanding, or this preparation. Do they truly believe in God? (No, they don't.) Isn't the essence of this manifestation that of a disbeliever? (Yes, it is.) That's how it is. People like this are exceptionally timid, terribly frightened, and afraid of physical suffering and something bad happening to them. They become as scared as skittish birds and can't perform their work anymore" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God exposes that antichrists are particularly selfish and despicable, and don't believe in God's sovereignty at all. When things happen to them, they always consider their own safety, prospects, and destinations. The responsibilities and mission of a created being do not exist in their hearts. When they face danger in their faith, they hide away. They do not care about the church's work or the life entry of the brothers and sisters, nor do they consider the interests of the house of God at all. Looking at myself again, I saw that I

was as selfish and despicable as an antichrist. When there was no danger, I could suffer and expend myself in my duty, but when real danger and hardship came, I hid like a turtle retracting its head into its shell at even the slightest sign of trouble, wanting to hide myself in a safe place where no one could find me, and completely disregarding the newcomers and the potential gospel recipients. Later, I learned that we had been sold out by a Judas, and I considered my own safety once again. I worried that because I wasn't a local, I would be beaten to death or crippled if I was caught, or that I might not withstand the torture and sell out the church, losing my chance of salvation, so I didn't want to go out to preach the gospel. I didn't recognize God's sovereignty, and when faced with danger, I pushed my duty to the back of my mind. I didn't protect the interests of God's house at all and I lived entirely in a state of timidity, fear, and self-preservation. I had been such a selfish and despicable disbeliever! Realizing these things, I felt even more regretful. I thought, "No matter what environment I am faced with next, I must do my duty properly."

After this, the police arrests became more severe and the upper leadership transferred me to another church. Just two months after arriving at that church, I noticed that a tracker was installed on my electric bike. I thought, "Did the police track me here by checking the surveillance records along the way? If so, I have no way to escape!" I felt fearful again, scared that if I went out in the open, I would be arrested by the police. But I recalled God's words from earlier, and I knew I couldn't abandon my duty to protect myself again, as I would lose my testimony. I read more of God's words: **"Regardless of how 'powerful' Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks**

and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but, moreover, must submit to all of God's orders and commands. Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God. In the eyes of God, Satan is inferior to the lilies on the mountain, to the birds flying in the air, to the fish in the sea, and to the maggots on the earth. Its role among all things is to serve all things, to serve mankind, and to serve God's work and His plan of management" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God.

God Himself, the Unique I). God is sovereign over all things. No person, event, and thing can surpass God's authority. No matter how rampant and vicious Satan is, it cannot exceed the limits set for it by God. Without God's permission, it does not dare to overstep the bounds, much less harm us. Satan is merely a pawn in God's hand, serving to perfect God's chosen people! I reflected on the years I'd spent spreading the gospel almost every day, running under surveillance cameras without being arrested. Once, at a hosting house, the police knocked, but we didn't open the door, and half an hour later, we disguised ourselves before going out, the police downstairs didn't recognize us, and we managed to escape. I saw that without God's permission, the police couldn't catch me. Realizing this, I resolved that if

God allowed me to be arrested, I would submit to His orchestrations and arrangements and give my life to testify for Him.

Later, I read a hymn of God's word, entitled **"The Most Meaningful Life"**: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). Pondering over this hymn, I felt a sense of assurance in my heart. For a created being, being able to fulfill one's duty is the most meaningful and valuable thing, and it is commemorated by God. Going through repeated persecutions and tribulations allowed me to truly see God's almightiness and sovereignty and gain faith in Him, to discern the evil essence of the great red dragon, and to understand my own selfish nature. Most importantly, I learned how to face death. These are things I could not have gained in a comfortable environment. Thank God!

47. A Reflection on Being Perfunctory

By Yihan, China

In December 2021, I started practicing video inspections. In the beginning, I studied and pondered with all my heart. Whenever I ran into something confusing, I sought solutions from the sister collaborating with me. She also often discussed with me the issues she identified in the videos. I would summarize my shortcomings and deviations each time, then try to search and learn the relevant principles. During the team discussions on principles, I would listen carefully to everyone's fellowship and ponder carefully to make up for my deficiencies. After practicing like this for some time, I made some progress in my specialist skills and was able to handle some tasks. I started feeling content, thinking I had grasped some principles. From then on, I rarely took the initiative to study. When fellowshipping principles and discussing issues with other team members, I no longer pondered in earnest as before, nor did I focus on summarizing the problems in the work. My approach to doing my duty became passive.

I remember that during a certain period, some brothers and sisters were new to their duties, and there were many issues with the videos they submitted. I needed to fellowship with them and reply to them one by one to address these issues. Some devious thoughts emerged in my heart: "If I carefully check each video and seek the relevant principles to fellowship with them and reply to them, it will take a lot of time and effort. When can I finish processing so many videos? Maybe I should just point out their issues briefly and let them figure out how to solve the problems themselves. This way, I can save a lot of effort." So, I merely pointed out the problems in the videos and indicated the general direction for making modifications. Another time, I inspected a video and discovered some issues in it. But I

wasn't sure about them, so I had a discussion with the sister collaborating with me. She said she didn't see any problems, but I still felt uneasy about it. After pondering for a while, I still wasn't certain whether they were problems. Then I considered being perfunctory, thinking, "Maybe I should just leave it as is. The sister grasps the principles better than I do. Even she says it's fine, so there shouldn't be any problems. I don't need to spend more time pondering on it. Besides, it's just my feeling. What if I'm wrong about it and delay the work?" With that thought, I stopped mulling on it and seeking the answer. Then I just submitted the video as it was. A few days later, our supervisor pointed out that there were some issues with the video and that they needed to be fixed. Subsequently, my brothers and sisters reported one after another that they felt negative after reading our suggestions. They thought that there were too many problems in the videos they had made, and they didn't know how to resolve them. Faced with these exposed issues, I felt completely at a loss. However, I remembered that the people, events, and things I encounter every day are arranged by God and under His sovereignty. Encountering these circumstances was not without a reason. There must be lessons for me to learn, so I prayed to God and sought His guidance.

During a devotional, I read these passages of God's words: **"It is something within a corrupt disposition to handle things so flippantly and irresponsibly: It is scumminess people often refer to. In all matters they do, they do it to the point of 'that's about right' and 'close enough'; it is an attitude of 'maybe,' 'possibly,' and 'four-out-of-five'; they do things perfunctorily, are satisfied to do the minimum, and are satisfied with bluffing their way through; they see no point in taking things seriously or being meticulous, and they see less point in seeking the truth principles. Is this not something within a corrupt disposition?"**

Is it a manifestation of normal humanity? It is not. To call it arrogance is right, and to call it dissolute is also entirely apt—but to capture it perfectly, the only word that will do is ‘scummy.’ Most people have scumminess within them, just to different degrees. In all matters, they wish to do things in a perfunctory and slipshod manner, and there is a whiff of deceit in everything they do. They cheat others when they can, cut corners when they are able, save time when they can. They think to themselves, ‘So long as I avoid being revealed, and cause no problems, and am not called to account, then I can muddle through this. I don’t have to do a very good job, that’s too much trouble!’ Such people learn nothing to mastery, and they do not apply themselves or suffer and pay a price in their studies. They want only to scratch the surface of a subject and then call themselves proficient at it, believing they have learned all there is to know, and then rely on this to muddle their way through. Is this not an attitude people have toward other people, events, and things? Is it a good attitude? It is not. Simply put, it is to ‘muddle through.’ Such scumminess exists in all of corrupt mankind. People with scumminess in their humanity take the view and attitude of ‘muddling through’ on anything they do. Are such people able to do their duty properly? No. Are they able to do things with principle? Even more unlikely” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). **“How can one tell the difference between noble and base people? Simply look at their attitude and actions toward duties, and look at how they treat things and behave when issues arise. People with integrity and dignity are meticulous, conscientious, and diligent in their actions, and they are willing to pay a price. People without integrity and dignity are careless and slipshod in their actions, always up to some trick, always wanting**

to just muddle through. No matter what technique they study, they do not learn it diligently, they are unable to learn it, and no matter how much time they spend studying it, they remain utterly ignorant. These are people of low character” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). **“They cheat others when they can,” “without integrity and dignity,” and “low character”**—every single word in those sentences pierced my heart. I reflected on my behavior in doing my duty. Wasn’t my performance exactly as God had exposed? When I had noticed that there were many issues with the videos made by the brothers and sisters, I hadn’t pondered how to help them resolve these issues, or guided them to understand the truth and enter into the principles. Instead, my primary consideration had been how to save myself some effort. I had thought that if I carefully checked each video and responded in detail, it would be too troublesome and require a lot of thought. So, I had just briefly mentioned the problems in the videos, but hadn’t fellowshiped with them about the principles or pointed out practical solutions. As a result, the brothers and sisters had felt negative after reading my suggestions. Had I not caused disruption by doing this? When inspecting that other video, I’d had a sense that there were some issues with it, but I didn’t want to ponder on them diligently because I wasn’t sure. I had even made excuses for myself, thinking that pondering might not necessarily lead to any results. The sister grasped the principles better than I did. Even she said it was fine, so there shouldn’t be any major problems. I hadn’t truly put in the effort to seek the answer before concluding that pondering might not lead to any results. Hadn’t I just been slippery and slacked off? I truly had been so deceitful! This attitude toward my duty was just as God had exposed: **“So long as I avoid being revealed, and cause no problems, and am not called to account, then I can muddle through**

this. I don't have to do a very good job, that's too much trouble!" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). Those words described me perfectly. I had gone through each day on autopilot. I had been content with avoiding physical hardship and just getting by. I had never considered the difficulties of my brothers and sisters or whether doing my duty this way was effective. If I could muddle through something, I just muddled through it, showing no loyalty to my duty. With such an attitude, I had been utterly untrustworthy, just as God describes, **"without integrity and dignity,"** and **"people of low character."** This was not an exaggeration at all. I felt deeply distressed and remorseful, so I prayed to God, "Oh God, my attitude toward my duty is too flippant and completely irresponsible. I don't want to live this lowly life anymore. I am willing to rebel against my flesh, be diligent and earnest, and pay a price to do my duty well."

After praying, I read some words of God and gained a better understanding of His requirements. God says: **"When doing a duty, one must learn to be conscientious, rigorous, meticulous, and responsible, and to do it in a firmly grounded manner, that is, by planting one foot ahead of the other. One must exert all their strength to do that duty well, until they are satisfied with how they have performed it. If one does not understand the truth, they should seek the principles, and act according to them and to God's requirements; they should willingly exert more effort to do their duty well, and never do it in a perfunctory manner. Only by practicing this way can one feel peace in their heart, without their conscience reproaching them"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). God requires us to be firmly grounded in our duties, maintaining a conscientious and responsible attitude in everything we do, seeking the truth principles,

and doing our best. I realized I could no longer be perfunctory. I needed to put God's requirements into practice, carefully inspecting each video and providing detailed, principle-based guidance on the issues. Although this would require a bit more physical suffering and thinking, if it led to better results in my duty, then it was worth it. Thereafter, as I continued to inspect and respond to my brothers and sisters' issues, I pondered how to express myself to achieve the best results. By implementing this approach, I didn't feel very tired, and I was able to enter more deeply into the principles. However, due to my severely corrupt disposition and excessive desire for physical comfort, I still felt tempted to take the easy way out and be perfunctory when faced with complex problems.

Once, while inspecting a video, I noticed some contained issues that were challenging to address. I thought, "If I make suggestions, I need to study and research first to find a breakthrough. That will be troublesome. Just thinking about it gives me a headache! If I spend all that time on it and still can't figure it out, wouldn't it be a waste of effort? Forget it. I'll focus on other videos for now and deal with these later when I have time." After some time, our leaders noticed a decline in the effectiveness of our video work, and rechecked the videos submitted by the brothers and sisters over the past three months. They found that quite a few videos had been left unaddressed, and that we didn't handle them promptly or provide guidance for the brothers and sisters to modify them according to the principles, causing significant delays to the video work. Seeing this result, I was dumbfounded. Wasn't all this due to my neglectful and perfunctory approach to my duty? I couldn't describe the feeling in my heart. It felt like a stone pressing on my chest, making me short of breath. Later, I read this passage of God's words: **"How you regard God's commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot**

complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man's supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God's commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). Reading these words of God, I felt God's righteous disposition. If I approached my duty with a casual attitude—always being perfunctory and slippery, and slacking off—it indicated a serious betrayal of God, and I would be unworthy of being in God's presence and deserving of curse and punishment. I was frightened, feeling that I was in a dangerous position. Thinking about the church's arrangement for me to inspect videos, the hope was that I would put all my heart and strength into the work and do it well. But I had been slippery in my duties and looking for ways to slack off. When encountering issues that I did not understand or could not see through, I failed to ponder them diligently. Rather, when faced with issues that required significant effort and thinking, I chose to save myself the trouble and set the videos aside, failing to promptly do research and study, or seek relevant principles to guide other team members. I had not fulfilled my responsibilities. What I had done entirely hindered the video work. Thinking back to when I first took on this duty, I resolved before God to cherish the opportunity of doing this duty and be loyal to repay God's love. But now, if I could just get by, I did so without any sense of responsibility. Wasn't this blatant deceit toward God? I had truly let God down and was not trustworthy! Thinking about this made me feel regretful and self-reproachful, and even more indebted to God. I cried as I prayed to God, "Oh God, my actions have only obstructed

and disrupted the work. I am willing to repent and correct my attitude toward my duty. Please guide me.”

Later, I began to ponder. At first, I wanted to do well in my duty, but how did it end up being like this? While seeking answers, I came across these passages of God’s words: **“Lazy people can’t do anything. To summarize it in two words, they are useless people; they have a second-class disability. No matter how good the caliber of lazy people is, it is nothing more than window dressing; even though they have good caliber, it is of no use. They are too lazy—they know what they are supposed to do, but they don’t do it, and even if they know something is a problem, they do not seek the truth to resolve it, and though they know what hardships they should suffer in order for the work to be effective, they are unwilling to endure these worthwhile hardships—so they cannot gain any truths, and they cannot do any real work. They do not wish to endure the hardships people are supposed to; they only know to indulge in comfort, enjoy times of joy and leisure, and enjoy a free and relaxed life. Are they not useless? People who cannot endure hardship don’t deserve to live. Those who always wish to live the life of a parasite are people without conscience or reason; they are beasts, and such people are unfit even to perform labor. Because they cannot endure hardship, even when they do perform labor, they are not able to do it well, and if they wish to gain the truth, there is even less hope of that. Someone who cannot suffer and does not love the truth is a useless person; they are unqualified even to perform labor. They are a beast, without a shred of humanity. Such people must be eliminated; only this accords with God’s intentions”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). **“Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly**

comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? ... I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If

you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). In the past, I never associated myself with terms like “trash” or “parasite,” let alone imagined that in God’s eyes, my behavior could be akin to that of a walking corpse, making no distinction between me with pigs and dogs. This realization was heart-wrenching and sad. But what God’s words exposed was exactly my behavior. I had been treating the enjoyment of physical comfort as my goal, always seeking to live an easy and leisurely life. When faced with difficulties in my duty that required me to make efforts and pay a price, I resorted to cunning and slothfulness. I would either muddle through to get by or ignore the videos and leave them unaddressed, doing whatever would save effort. I failed to fulfill my responsibilities, causing delays in the work. Wasn’t I exactly trash and a parasite just living off others? I had fallen into this state because I had been poisoned and influenced by such satanic toxins as “Life is short, so enjoy it while you can,” “Drink today’s wine today,” and “Treat yourself while you’re alive.” These toxic ideologies led me to prioritize my physical comfort above all else, only ensuring that I wouldn’t be exhausted or stressed. As for whether I fulfilled my responsibilities and obligations, or whether God approved of how I carried out my duty, I didn’t care at all. Living by these toxins made me increasingly selfish and degenerated, devoid of any resolve to pursue positive things. Although this approach made life easier for me, it resulted in no growth or gain. Rather, it hindered the work, resulting in transgression. Indulging in physical comfort equates to ruining myself!

Later, I was selected to be a team leader. At that time, two sisters had just started practicing making videos. Besides making videos on my own, I had to guide their work and manage the overall work of the group. Sometimes, seeing that the problems in some videos were complicated, I would again think of taking shortcuts. I thought, "If I seek the principles for each problem and ponder, it would take a lot of thinking. When can I ever finish all these tasks at hand? Just thinking about it makes me feel exhausted. It's too much trouble! Maybe I shouldn't be so meticulous. As long as it looks acceptable, that should be enough." I realized that I was once again seeking physical comfort. Recalling Noah's attitude toward his duty, I looked up related words of God. Almighty God says: **"From when God entrusted the construction of the ark to Noah, at no point did Noah think to himself, 'When is God going to destroy the world? When is He going to give me the signal that He will do so?' Rather than pondering such matters, Noah earnestly took each thing that God had told him to heart, and then carried each one out. After accepting what was entrusted to him by God, Noah set about carrying out and executing the construction of the ark spoken of by God as the most important thing in his life, without the slightest hint of carelessness. Days passed, years went by, day after day, year after year. God was never supervising Noah, spurring him on, but throughout all this time, Noah persevered in the important task entrusted to him by God. Every word and phrase that God had uttered was inscribed on Noah's heart like words carved upon a stone tablet. Heedless of the changes in the outside world, of the ridicule of those around him, of the hardship involved, or of the difficulties he encountered, he persevered, throughout, in what had been entrusted to him by God, never despairing or thinking of giving up. God's words were inscribed upon**

Noah's heart, and they had become his everyday reality. ... In Noah's heart, there was no higher instruction that he ought to follow and carry out: God's words were his lifelong direction and goal. So, no matter what God said to him, no matter what God asked him to do, commanded him to do, Noah completely accepted it, and took it to heart; he regarded it as the most important thing in his life, and handled it accordingly. He not only did not forget, he not only kept it in his heart, but also realized it in his daily life, using his life to accept and carry out God's commission. And in this way, plank by plank, the ark was built. Noah's every move, his every day, were dedicated to the words and commandments of God. It might not have seemed that Noah was performing a momentous undertaking, but in the eyes of God, everything Noah did, even every step he took to achieve something, every labor performed by his hand—they were all precious, and deserving of remembrance, and worthy of emulation by this mankind”

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Two: How Noah and Abraham Obeyed God's Words and Submitted to Him (Part One)). Noah's attitude toward his duty made me feel ashamed. No matter how difficult it was to build the ark or what sacrifices it required, Noah had only one goal in mind: to fulfill God's commission to satisfy Him. To achieve this goal, Noah truly endured hardship and paid a price, gathering all the necessary materials and building the ark piece by piece with a hammer and chisel, persisting for 120 years. I was deeply inspired by Noah's experience. I could no longer seek comfort and treat my duty perfunctorily. I needed to pray and rely on God and emulate Noah's attitude toward his duty. No matter the difficulties or the price in doing my duty, I had to do my best to cooperate. Afterward, I brought my state before God in prayers. Sometimes when I found many issues in some videos, I would first carefully ponder them by applying the

principles and discuss them with my partnered sister, and then communicate with our brothers and sisters. When faced with complex problems in some videos, instead of ignoring them, I would search for information to learn and seek breakthroughs, doing my best to fellowship with the brothers and sisters about the paths to practice. In managing the overall work, I also tried my best to accommodate all aspects, communicating with my partnered sister to address any deviations or problems we encountered in the work. After a period of collaboration in this manner, both the sister and I made some progress. Previously, I had only a superficial understanding of some principles. But through fellowship with my brothers and sisters, I gained deeper insights into these problems, which helped me improve my specialist skills. I also felt a greater sense of burden in my duty than before. Only then did I realize that through the process of doing our duties, God enlightens and guides us to understand the truth principles bit by bit, giving us burdens and opportunities for practice. Although our flesh may suffer a bit, ultimately, we are the ones who benefit from it. Thank God!

48. The Price of Hypocrisy

By Flora, USA

In June of 2021, I was elected as a church leader. At the time, this was honestly quite unexpected as I was quite young in comparison to the other leaders, and because my life entry was pretty shallow, I didn't know if I'd be able to handle this duty. But when I saw just how many brothers and sisters voted for me, I felt that everyone approved of me, so I accepted the duty. I went on to actively equip myself with the truth principles, and when I encountered problems I didn't understand, I'd quickly seek help from others, and so, I gradually gained a better understanding of how to do church work. One day, a sister I was partnered with told me, "The upper leader has said that you're progress-oriented and able to actively overcome difficulties. That's pretty good." I was really happy to hear this, and hadn't expected to receive such praise from the leadership, and it seemed that in their eyes, I was a person who pursued the truth and was upward-looking, and I resolved to keep working hard. But shortly after this, problems started to emerge in my work one after another. The supervisors I had selected weren't doing real work, and I didn't continually follow up on or supervise their work, which caused serious losses to the work. The leader pruned me for being irresponsible in my duty, calling me a pencil pusher who didn't protect the work of the church. I felt a twinge of guilt at my negligence and worried about what the leader would think of me, and whether he would think I'd not followed principles in my personnel selection, and dismiss me because I wasn't suited for leadership. What would my brothers and sisters think of me if I really were dismissed? Would they say that they'd been wrong in electing me as a leader? I felt really despondent. I thought about how the leader called me a pencil pusher who was irresponsible in their

duty. I didn't want to get stuck with this label, so I thought that maybe if I performed well moving forward, the leader's evaluation of me might change and the brothers and sisters would have a whole new level of respect for me. They might say that even after being pruned, I didn't give up in negativity, but instead continued to do my duty normally, which showed that I was a person who pursued the truth. In this way, my reputation of being progress-oriented and motivated would be preserved. With these things in mind, I tried to resolve the problems in my work as quickly as possible.

Later, the upper leader would often ask after my work, but I didn't do things in as straightforward a way as I used to. Instead of promptly seeking out the leader if I encountered any problems or difficulties, now I was afraid that he would discover something else that I hadn't done properly. One time, we needed to find somebody to supervise general affairs work. My first thought went to Sister Khloe, who was pretty skilled in handling general affairs, able to protect the interests of the church when things happened, and willing to take pains in her duties without fear of exhaustion. But then I remembered that she'd been dismissed as a supervisor before because of her arrogant disposition and inability to work with others. If I promoted her again and she behaved the same way, would the leader think I lacked discernment and only saw people as they appeared? I remained uncertain about whether Khloe could take on a supervisory role again, but I was too afraid to seek guidance from the leader, and the process of selecting a supervisor remained unconcluded. There was also the matter of the church leader Harlow. Six brothers and sisters had come together to report her for being extraordinarily arrogant, and for using her position to talk down to and suppress people. I went to the team leaders and supervisors to look into the matter. I found out that Harlow was indeed quite arrogant and liked to

lecture others but some also said she was doing so because the brothers and sisters were violating principles. Seeing these differing evaluations, I couldn't see things clearly. I thought about seeking guidance from the upper leader, but then I thought about how I had made several mistakes in a row in discerning people, how the leader had fellowshiped many principles to me, and yet now, faced with a situation, I was still unable to discern people, and I wondered whether he would think I was of poor caliber, unable to understand principles no matter how much they were fellowshiped, and unfit to be a leader. I hesitated, thinking I should observe more first and only dismiss her once I fully understood the situation.

One day, the leader discovered issues with my selection of the person supervising general affairs work and fellowshiped the principles of handling such matters. He said, "Being dismissed before doesn't mean one can't be a supervisor again, this depends on a person's repentance. Moreover, selecting a general affairs supervisor is different from selecting a church leader. The focus isn't on their pursuit of the truth but on whether they are the right person who can uphold the church's work. Additionally, if most people think they have a talent for this, they can practice. If you're not sure, you can have other brothers and sisters cooperate with her." After his fellowship, he also pruned me for delaying the issue for so long without seeking solutions, saying I was being too selfish and not protecting the church's work. I didn't expect that the more I tried to disguise myself and conceal things, the more problems were exposed. Unconsciously, I'd started paying more attention to people's tone and expressions. When the leader talked to me, I'd try to guess from his tone of voice if his impression of me was worsening, if he was assessing my suitability as a leader, and if he would stop giving me responsibilities. To my surprise, a month later, the leader arranged for me to supervise video work. I thought, "If I don't do

well this time, I might really be dismissed. I need to seize this opportunity and perform well.” However, I wasn’t familiar with video work, and when problems arose, I didn’t know how to solve them. When the leader asked about the state of the work, I became very nervous, afraid he would notice something I hadn’t done properly. So, when reporting on work, I only reported good news and not bad news, highlighting areas of progress, and I’d say I was working hard on solutions for areas that weren’t progressing. During that period, I felt immense pressure. Several times, I considered confessing to the leader that I couldn’t handle the job, but I worried that if I did, I would lose my only redeeming quality of being progress-oriented for good. Before I knew it, six months had passed, and the work that should have taken one month had been delayed by half a year. My state became worse and worse. When eating and drinking God’s words, I didn’t receive any light and I kept getting sleepy, and my prayers felt disconnected from God. I felt a constant sense of anxiety and unease.

The leader dug a little deeper in questioning me one time, discovered these issues, and dismissed me. He said, “You don’t pursue the truth, and you’re too vain. You prefer to do your duty alone, never consult or seek from others, and you’re too concerned with your reputation and status! Based on your consistent behavior, you can’t continue as a leader.” At the moment I was dismissed, it was clear to me that God’s righteous disposition was upon me, and that I only had myself to blame. Shortly after, I learned that Harlow had been running amok in the church, forming cliques, and suppressing and tormenting those who didn’t follow her. The church was in turmoil, people had become disorganized, and she was eventually isolated due to her evil humanity. Facing this result, I was deeply unsettled. My failure to see her issues clearly and seek guidance in a timely manner had left an evil person in a leadership position, harming the brothers and sisters

for so long and severely disturbing the church's work. Reflecting on how poorly I had done my duties, I was filled with guilt and felt too ashamed to face the brothers and sisters. I kept questioning myself: How did I end up like this? I knelt before God in prayer, asking Him to enlighten and guide me on how to truly reflect on and understand all that I had done.

Later, as I read some of God's words, I began to gain some understanding of my state. Almighty God says: **"If you are a leader or worker, are you afraid of the house of God making inquiries about and supervising your work? Are you afraid that the house of God will discover lapses and mistakes in your work and prune you? Are you afraid that after the Above gets to know your real caliber and stature, they will see you in a different light and not consider you for promotion? If you have these fears, this proves that your motivations are not for the sake of church work, you are working for the sake of reputation and status, which proves that you have the disposition of an antichrist. If you have the disposition of an antichrist, you are liable to walk the path of antichrists, and commit all the evil wrought by antichrists. If, in your heart, you have no fear of God's house supervising your work, and you are able to provide real answers to the questions and inquiries of the Above, without hiding anything, and say as much as you know, then regardless of whether what you say is right or wrong, irrespective of the corruption you revealed—even if you revealed the disposition of an antichrist—you will absolutely not be defined as an antichrist. What's key is whether you are able to know your own disposition of an antichrist, and whether you are able to seek the truth in order to solve this problem. If you are someone who accepts the truth, your antichrist's disposition can be fixed. If you know full well that you have the disposition of an antichrist and yet do**

not seek the truth to resolve it, if you even try to conceal or lie about problems that occur and shirk responsibility, and if you do not accept the truth when subjected to pruning, then this is a serious problem, and you are no different from an antichrist. Knowing that you have the disposition of an antichrist, why do you not dare face it? Why can you not approach it frankly and say, ‘If the Above inquires about my work, I’ll say all I know, and even if the bad things I’ve done come to light, and the Above no longer makes use of me once they know, and I lose my status, I’ll still say clearly what I have to say’? Your fear of supervision of and inquiries after your work by God’s house proves that you treasure your status more than the truth. Is this not the disposition of an antichrist? To cherish status above all is the disposition of an antichrist” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They

Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). God’s word exposed my state. I was afraid of the leader supervising and inquiring about my work primarily because I was driven by concerns about reputation and position. I feared that the leader would discover problems in my work and dismiss me, and I feared losing my position. So, when faced with deviations and problems in my work, I did my best to cover them up, and so long as I could maintain my position, I preferred to resort to deceit and delay the work. My love for my position to such an extent revealed my antichrist disposition. I felt that the brothers and sisters and the leader had a good opinion of me, so I wanted to perform well in all aspects to retain my position as a leader. Because of my irresponsibility in my duty, and lack of principles in selecting people, I was pruned several times. After that, I began to speculate on whether the leader might say my caliber is inadequate and dismiss me, causing me to lose my position. This was the root of my fear. So, I started to disguise and cover up myself. When the leader

followed up on the work and asked some questions, I would think over my responses several times before answering, trying to minimize the exposure of problems. I reported progress in my work but kept the issues hidden. When I encountered people or matters I was unclear on, I didn't seek guidance, but instead, I disguised myself to make the leader think I could handle and resolve actual issues. And even when some work was stalled and couldn't proceed, I still disguised myself and didn't seek guidance, all to protect my status. Blinded by my concern for reputation and status, I made mistake after mistake, causing much work to be delayed and unable to progress normally. I recalled God's words which say: **"Why can you not approach it frankly and say, 'If the Above inquires about my work, I'll say all I know, and even if the bad things I've done come to light, and the Above no longer makes use of me once they know, and I lose my status, I'll still say clearly what I have to say'? Your fear of supervision of and inquiries after your work by God's house proves that you treasure your status more than the truth. Is this not the disposition of an antichrist? To cherish status above all is the disposition of an antichrist."** Facing the exposure of God's words, I felt deeply condemned. God teaches us that when reporting work, we must speak honestly, regardless of the problems. Even if it means losing status, we must speak clearly on issues and not conceal them, and report problems honestly. However, my actions were exactly the opposite. I preferred to lie, disguise, and deceive, sacrificing my integrity to protect my reputation and status. God's words fully convinced me, showing me that what I truly pursued and valued was only reputation and status.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"Antichrists are inherently wicked; they don't possess a heart of honesty, of love for the truth, or of love for positive things. They are often living in dark**

corners—they do not act with an attitude of honesty, they are not forthright in their words, and they are wicked and deceitful toward other people and God. They want to deceive others, and to deceive God, as well. They will not accept others' supervision, much less God's scrutiny. ... After someone like that gains status, they become even more surreptitious in their behavior around other people. They want to protect their ambitions, their reputation, their image and their name, their status and dignity, and so on. That's why they don't want to be up front about how they do things or their motives for doing things. Even when they make a mistake, reveal a corrupt disposition, or when the motives and intents behind their actions are wrong, they don't want to open up and allow others to find out about it, and they often put up an appearance of innocence and perfection to trick the brothers and sisters. And with the Above and with God, they only say nice-sounding things, and often use deceptive tactics and lies to maintain their relationship with the Above. When they report to the Above on their work, and talk to the Above, they never say anything unpleasant, so that no one can discover any of their weak points. They will never mention what they've done down below, any of the issues that have arisen in the church, the problems or flaws in their work, or things they can't understand or see through to. They never ask or seek with the Above about these things, and instead just present an image and appearance of competence in their work, of being capable of completely shouldering their work. They don't report any of the problems that exist in the church to the Above, and no matter how chaotic things may be in the church, the magnitude of the flaws that have appeared in their work, or exactly what they've been doing down below, they repeatedly cover all that up, endeavoring to never let the Above catch wind of or

hear any news about these things, even going so far as to transfer people who are connected to these matters or who know the truth about them to faraway places in an effort to conceal what's really going on. What sort of practices are these? What kind of behavior is this? Is it the sort of manifestation a person who pursues the truth ought to have? Very clearly, it is not. This is the behavior of a demon. Antichrists will do their utmost to conceal, to cover up anything that could have an impact on their status or reputation, keeping these things from other people and from God. This is deceiving those above and below them"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eleven). God dissects the wicked nature of antichrists. When it comes to their own status and reputation, antichrists, despite having made mistakes or done evil, still go to great lengths to disguise, deceive, and create false appearances for others. They deceive both their superiors and those beneath them, never seeking the truth to resolve or correct things, nor do they reflect or repent. Ever since I was pruned, I began to suspect that the leader had a poor impression of me. After that, whether I was speaking, acting, or reporting work, my primary concern was how to maintain my reputation and status. When I couldn't see through to people and didn't know how to handle situations appropriately, I did not seek help or report it to the leader, but instead ignored the issues and shelved them, which delayed the work. When the video work encountered difficulties and I didn't know how to proceed, I still did not seek guidance or honestly report the problems or the real situation to the leader. The thought that ran through my head most was that, as a leader, if I couldn't solve these problems, I might be dismissed. So, regardless of how important the work was, I continued to protect my reputation and status, using various deceptions to present myself as capable of solving problems, which delayed the video work for as long as six months. In essence, I was lying through

my teeth, and deceiving those both above and under me. I saw that my disposition was truly wicked and deceitful! I reflected on my past experiences at work in the world. Whenever leaders came to inspect work and evaluate outstanding units, as soon as we learned of what was being inspected, we would work overtime to add various fake materials to deal with the inspection, and we would erase all traces of parts with poor performance or reported issues. In this way, we usually managed to get away with inspections and receive the title of “Outstanding Unit.” Under the influence of such an evil trend, people no longer focus on speaking or doing things honestly; they deceive each other and use any means at their disposal to achieve their goals. I couldn’t discern positive and negative things before accepting God’s work of the last days. I conformed to the world’s evil trends and lived without any human likeness. Now, even after accepting God’s work of the last days for many years, eating and drinking much of God’s word, and understanding some bases of being human, I still resorted to deceit and false appearances in my duties to maintain my reputation and status, only reporting on good things and leaving out the bad, which was knowingly committing offense, and deceiving and opposing God. Reflecting on this, I was filled with fear. In the past, when hearing about the behavior of antichrists being exposed by God, I always associated them with those who committed many evils and were obviously antichrists, never seriously identifying myself with these words. Now, through the exposure of God’s words and the revelation of facts, I saw that I indeed had the disposition and behaviors of an antichrist. I urgently prayed to God in my heart, wishing to repent and change, and not wanting to conduct myself like this anymore.

Later, I read a few passages of God’s words, which gave me a further understanding of my issues and a path for practice. Almighty God says:

“Some people are promoted and cultivated by the church, receiving a good chance to train. This is something good. It can be said they have been elevated and graced by God. So how, then, should they do their duty? The first principle they should abide by is to understand the truth—when they do not understand the truth, they must seek the truth, and if they still don’t understand after seeking on their own, they can find someone who does understand the truth to fellowship and seek with, which will make solving the problem faster and more timely. If you focus only on spending more time reading God’s words by yourself, and on spending more time pondering these words, in order to achieve understanding of the truth and solve the problem, this is too slow; as the saying goes, ‘Slow remedies can’t address urgent needs.’ If, when it comes to the truth, you wish to make quick progress, then you must learn how to work in harmony with others, and to ask more questions and seek more. Only then will your life grow quickly, and will you be able to solve problems promptly, without any delay in either. Because you have only just been promoted and are still on probation, and do not truly understand the truth or possess the truth reality—because you still lack this stature—do not think that your promotion means you possess the truth reality; this is not the case. It is merely because you have a sense of burden toward the work and possess the caliber of a leader that you are selected for promotion and cultivation. You should have this reason. If, after being promoted and becoming a leader or worker, you start to assert your status, and believe that you are someone who pursues the truth and that you possess the truth reality—and if, regardless of what problems the brothers and sisters have, you pretend that you understand, and that you are spiritual—then this is a foolish way to be, and it is the same way as the hypocritical Pharisees.

You must speak and act truthfully. When you don't understand, you can ask others or seek fellowship from the Above—there is nothing shameful about any of this. Even if you don't ask, the Above will still know your true stature, and will know that the truth reality is absent in you. Seeking and fellowshiping are what you ought to be doing; this is the reason that should be found in normal humanity, and the principle that should be adhered to by leaders and workers. It is not something to be embarrassed about. If you think that once you are a leader it is embarrassing to not understand the principles, or to constantly be asking other people or the Above questions, and you're afraid that others will look down on you, and then you put on an act as a result, pretending that you understand everything, that you know everything, that you have work capability, that you can do any church work, and do not need anyone to remind you or fellowship with you, or anyone to provide for you or support you, then this is dangerous, and you are too arrogant and self-righteous, too lacking in reason. You don't even know your own measure—does this not make you a muddleheaded person? Such people do not actually meet the criteria for being promoted and cultivated by the house of God, and sooner or later they will be dismissed and eliminated” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). “Some also say, ‘When we encounter difficulties or issues, we need to ponder for a few days first, and only report it if we really can't find a solution.’ It might sound like those who say this have some reason, but aren't these days of pondering likely to cause delays? Can you be certain that a few days of pondering will resolve the issue? Can you guarantee it won't cause further delay? Others say, ‘If we report an issue immediately, won't the Above think we can't even see through this minor issue? Won't they

call us foolish and ignorant and prune us?’ They’re wrong to say this—regardless of whether you report the issue or not, the quality of your caliber is already apparent; the Above knows it all. Do you think the Above will regard you highly if you don’t report some issue? If you do report the issue, and it hasn’t caused delays to significant matters, God’s house will not hold you accountable. However, if you don’t report it and it leads to delays, you will be held directly responsible, and you will be immediately dismissed, never to be used again. God’s chosen people will also see you as ignorant, foolish, feeble-minded, and mentally unhinged, and they will hate you and forever despise you. ... By now, you all should be able to see through these kinds of problems, right? When you encounter issues you cannot handle, quickly report them and fellowship for solutions with the decision-making group. If the decision-making group can’t handle them, immediately report them to the Above; don’t worry about this or that, being able to promptly resolve the issue is what’s most crucial” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). God’s words awoke me. In God’s house, being a leader is merely a matter of practice and being cultivated. Therefore, when encountering confusions and difficulties in one’s duties, one needs to cooperate and discuss with others and seek help from superiors to avoid delaying the work. If a person always puts themselves on a pedestal, thinking that being selected as a leader means they should therefore understand the truth principles and have the ability to solve problems, and they disguise themselves and refuse to seek even when they encounter issues they don’t understand, then such a person lacks reason and overly protects their own reputation and status, and they can easily delay the church’s work. I was a living example of this. I had known that my understanding of the truth was shallow and that I lacked much, but I

thought that since I had been selected as a leader, I should therefore understand the truth principles better than brothers and sisters and have greater abilities than them in solving problems, and that in this way, the brothers and sisters could then be won over and the upper leader could approve of me. When I held this erroneous view, I couldn't help but want to disguise myself. When problems arose in my duties that I didn't know how to resolve, I could never speak out and seek help, fearing that it would make me look incompetent and be embarrassing, so I would always try to solve the problems on my own. I became stuck in the quagmire of reputation and status, as if my mind were clouded. I continued to disguise myself and deceive, which seriously delayed the church work. Reflecting on this, I gave myself a few hard slaps on the face and felt deeply remorseful and guilty. I then read this passage of God's words: **"No matter what confusions or difficulties you encounter in your work, as long as they can affect God's chosen people in doing their duties or hinder the normal progress of church work, the issues should be resolved promptly. If you cannot resolve an issue on your own, you should seek out a few people who understand the truth to resolve it with. If even this does not work, then you must bring the issue forward and report it to the Above to seek a solution. This is the responsibility and obligation of leaders and workers"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). From God's words, I understood a principle. In matters relating to church work and duties, no matter what the situation is, as long as a problem affects the duties of God's chosen people or obstructs the normal progress of church work, it should be resolved in a timely manner. On things we do not understand, we should consult knowledgeable people and find solutions as quickly as possible. However, I always believed that I was investigating and actively solving these

problems when I was facing them, but I never considered whether I could actually resolve them, or even if I could, how long this would take, or whether it would delay the work. I didn't consider these factors, and unknowingly missed the best time to address the issues. This was not active cooperation, much less was it facing difficulties head-on. It was clearly working independently and recklessly, which was not being responsible toward the work and severely delayed the church work. I was truly absurd and foolish! In fact, when leaders inquire about work or ask if we have any issues, it is in the hope that we will bring out real problems and seek fellowship. This will help us understand the truth, grasp principles, and gradually learn to handle actual work. This is such a positive thing! The more I thought about it, the more I regretted what I had done. If I had just recognized the essence and consequences of disguising myself and turned this around sooner, I would not have caused so much loss to the work, and I would not have missed so many opportunities to gain the truth.

Once, the leader arranged for me to supervise the painting work and fellowshipped many times on principles and requirements. I felt that I understood those things well at the time, but when I actually started working, I realized that I didn't understand some details and I didn't know how to proceed. I felt anxious again. When the leader had fellowshipped with me, I'd been emphatic in confirming my understanding, but now that I was actually doing the job, I didn't know what I was doing. What was I to do? I wanted to ask the leader again, but then I wondered whether the leader would say, "Even though I fellowshipped in such detail and repeated things several times, how do you still not understand? Your caliber really seems to be lacking!" So, once again, I didn't dare ask the leader for help. Three days passed, and I was very anxious, so I knelt down to pray to God and told Him about my state. After praying, I thought about my experience of

previous failures and I remembered these words of God: **“No matter what confusions or difficulties you encounter in your work, as long as they can affect God’s chosen people in doing their duties or hinder the normal progress of church work, the issues should be resolved promptly. If you cannot resolve an issue on your own, you should seek out a few people who understand the truth to resolve it with. If even this does not work, then you must bring the issue forward and report it to the Above to seek a solution. This is the responsibility and obligation of leaders and workers”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). God’s words reminded me that if I didn’t seek understanding quickly, as the days passed, if the work was not completed on time, progress would be delayed. Realizing this, I decided to be honest and not cover up or disguise myself, regardless of how the leader might view me. Then I sought help from the leader, and he fellowshipped everything again, and the problem was resolved immediately. I offered a prayer of thanks and praise to God. Practicing like this was truly sweet and liberating.

Reflecting on the experience, I am deeply grateful to God for arranging so many situations for me to go through. Although these revealed much of my corruption, they were the best opportunities for me to understand myself. Through the exposure, enlightenment, and guidance of God’s words, I now have a better understanding of myself, learned some lessons, and found some ways on how to fulfill my duties well. I thank God from the bottom of my heart.

49. A Different Kind of Blessing

By Tao Liang, China

I've had hepatitis B since I was young. To get treatment, I sought all sorts of doctors and medications and spent a lot of money, but it still wasn't cured. Ultimately, one doctor said to me helplessly, "This illness is a dilemma for doctors everywhere; there's nothing we can do." I was in total despair. To my surprise, more than a year after I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, I miraculously got healed. At the time, the doctor looked at my test results and told me that all my levels had returned to normal on their own, and that I wouldn't need to take any meds in the future. Needless to say, I was very happy when I heard this, and I knew in my heart that God had gotten rid of my illness. I was full of gratitude toward and praise for God, and I thought to myself, "God has really graced and blessed me. I've got to expend myself for Him diligently and repay His love by doing my duty." I also thought, "I've just started believing in God and have yet to do anything for Him, but He's already graced and favored me so much. If I expend myself for Him more in the future, then won't the grace and blessings He bestows upon me be even greater? Maybe I'll even be able to attain salvation and go on living when God's work is over!" With that, I gave up my high-paying job and did my duty at the church full-time. After that, I was selected to be a church leader, and I was even more motivated to forsake and expend myself. I busied myself at the church every day, working from dawn to dusk. I spread the gospel and watered newcomers, not even having time to look after my child. Even when my husband was hospitalized and my father had to get surgery away from home twice, I didn't make the time to go care for them. My family members didn't understand me and complained to me, but my resolve to do my duty

did not waver. I thought that if I endured this suffering and paid this price, God would take note and would not treat me unfairly.

At the beginning of 2015, I often felt like my whole body lacked energy. Even if I was walking up to the fifth floor without carrying anything, I'd have to rest before going up. When I went home after gatherings, I just wanted to lie down and didn't feel like doing a thing. I went to the hospital to get tests, and the doctor said that my liver was functioning abnormally. If I didn't get treatment right away, it could turn into cirrhosis of the liver and ascites, and if it continued to get worse, it could become cancerous. Hearing the doctor's words, I froze. I thought to myself, "How could this be? When I took tests before, didn't the doctor say that my illness was cured? Why has it gotten worse again?" I suddenly recalled that I'd heard about someone who got liver cancer and died. I was very scared, worrying that since my illness was so serious, maybe I would die as well. I thought, "If I die now, can I still attain salvation?" At the time, my heart was in great pain. However, I also thought that since now I was a church leader, busying myself at the church all day from dawn to dusk, God ought to care for me and protect me to keep me from dying. During those couple days, I happened to see an old sister I knew who said that she'd been diagnosed with leukemia several years ago and that her cancer markers were quite high. In her weakest moments, she would often sing hymns of God's words, gaining some understanding of God's sovereignty from His words, and gaining faith. She also reflected on her motives and impurities in her duty, and once she had gained some self-knowledge, her illness gradually began to improve. Hearing about this sister's experience, I realized that this illness of mine could be a trial from God and that He could be testing me. I absolutely mustn't blame Him; I had to stand firm in my testimony for God. Maybe God would see that I was still able to persist in

my duty even when my illness was so severe, and then He would cure me. So, I chose not to stay at the hospital and only bought some medication, and then I continued doing my duty in the church.

In September of 2017, I went to the hospital for another check-up, and the doctor told me, “You’re now experiencing early-stage cirrhosis, and there are tubercles and cysts in your liver. It’s best if we do further testing.” Hearing the doctor’s words, my mind began to buzz, and I thought, “My family has a history of liver disease. My grandfather died from liver cancer long ago, and my father also passed away recently because the tubercles in his liver became cancerous. Now, there are tubercles in my liver as well; am I going to be dead soon too?” At the time, I was extremely scared, thinking, “I’m only in my thirties; am I really about to die? God’s work isn’t even finished and I’m already on the verge of death. Doesn’t that mean I’ll be eliminated by God and won’t be able to attain salvation?” Thinking of this, I couldn’t hold back tears any longer. As I was walking home, I recalled my years of believing in God. I’d given up a high-paying job to do my duty and busied myself from dawn to dusk at the church. I had no time to look after my child, and I wasn’t even willing to delay my duty when my husband and father got surgery. My family members didn’t understand me and complained to me, but I kept persisting in my duty. I had expended myself so much over these years; why wasn’t God caring for me or protecting me and even allowing my illness to get worse? Was it that I hadn’t done my duty well and so God was paying no heed to me and leaving me for dead? I wasn’t ready to die at such a young age; I wanted to wait until God’s work was over so that I could survive and enter the kingdom!

That night, I was tossing and turning in bed, unable to sleep. I saw my child fast asleep next to me, and it made me extremely sad and upset. I didn’t know how much longer I could be there for him, and it felt like death

could descend upon me at any time. I felt utterly miserable and helpless. During those couple days, the sister I was partnered with saw that my state was poor and fellowshipped on God's words with me, but it went in one ear and out the other, and I was just hoping that God could get rid of my illness on the grounds that I hadn't given up my duty even when I was so seriously ill. During that time, I was always very despondent, especially when I saw that some of the brothers and sisters around me hadn't forsaken and expended themselves as much as I did but were still in great health and not seriously ill like I was. I thought that God might have been using this illness to reveal and eliminate me. I became despondent to such an extent that I was no longer as diligent in my duty as I'd been before. When doing my duty, if it got late or if I was slightly tired, I would fear that my body was getting exhausted, and sometimes, I would put off work that I could have finished if I hurried until the next day. I thought, "What's the point of exerting myself even more? I've suffered and expended myself for all these years, but in the end, my illness hasn't gotten better, and I still have to die when the time comes." I even wanted to tell the leader that I was going to let go of my duty so that I could recuperate properly, and although I didn't end up doing it, my heart had grown distant from God. I had nothing to say when praying, and I didn't read God's words as often. Later on, I was arrested by the Communist Party. After I was released, the police were still monitoring me, so I had to go work in another part of the country. I saw nonbelievers who were in great health and performed their work with vigor, while I, with my sallow complexion, was clearly an invalid. I couldn't help but reason in my heart, thinking, "I've expended myself so much for God over these years. Even when I was arrested by the Communist Party, I didn't deny God's name and stood firm in my testimony. Why isn't God caring for me, protecting me, and helping me get over my illness quickly?"

I was aware that I shouldn't reason with God like this, but I didn't seek the truth, and I went on for a long time without resolving my state.

Later on, I watched some experiential testimony videos and saw that some brothers and sisters were able to self-reflect and seek the truth amidst illness and even write about their gains. I really envied them, and I was very moved. I had also experienced illness, but I hadn't sought the truth, and to that day I had gained nothing. I came before God and prayed, "God, I also want to learn lessons amidst illness like these brothers and sisters. Please guide me and help me." One day, I watched a movie called Reaping Joy Amid Suffering in which a sister, amidst her illness, comes to know God's love and understands that God is using her illness to perfect and change her. In the end, this experience leads to her repentance and transformation. Her younger sister says to her, "You're so blessed! To put you through trials and refine you in this way in order to change and perfect you, God must love you so much! I'm so envious! When will God bless me like that?" Listening to this, I was quite moved, and I also felt ashamed. I had always thought that having such a serious illness meant that God detested and hated me, that He was using this illness to reveal and eliminate me. Comparing this to the sister's understanding, my view on things was completely preposterous! During my devotionals, I read a passage of God's words: **"If God loves you, He expresses this by often chastening, disciplining, and pruning you. Although your days may pass uncomfortably, amid chastening and discipline, once you have experienced this, you will discover that you have learned much, that you have discernment and are wise when it comes to interacting with other people, and also that you have come to understand some truths. If the love of God were like the love of a mother or father, as you imagine it to be, if He were so scrupulous in His care, and invariably indulgent, could you gain these things? You**

could not. And so, the love of God people can comprehend is different from the true love of God they can experience in His work; people must approach it according to God's words and seek the truth in His words in order to know what true love is. If they do not seek the truth, how could someone who is corrupt conjure, out of thin air, an understanding of what God's love is, what the aim of His work in man is, and where His painstaking intentions lie? People would never understand these things. This is the most likely misunderstanding people have about God's work, and it is the aspect of God's essence that people find most difficult to understand. People must experience it profoundly and personally and practically engage with it and appreciate it in order to be able to understand it. Ordinarily, when people say 'love' they mean giving someone what they like, not giving them something bitter when they want something sweet, or even if sometimes they are given something bitter, it is in order to treat an illness; in brief, it involves the selfishness, the feelings, and the flesh of man; it involves aims and motivations. But no matter what God does in you, no matter how He judges and chastises you, chastens and disciplines you, or how He prunes you, even if you misunderstand Him, and even complain about Him in your heart, God shall, with unflagging patience, continue to work in you. What is God's ultimate aim in doing this? He uses this method to awaken you, so that one day you can understand God's intentions. But when God sees this outcome, what has He gained? He has actually gained nothing. And why do I say this? Because your all comes from God. God does not need to gain anything. All He needs is for people to properly follow and enter in accordance with what He requires while He performs His work, to ultimately be able to live out the truth reality, to live with the likeness of man, and no

longer be misled, beguiled, and tempted by Satan, to be able to rebel against Satan, to submit to and worship God, and then God is well pleased, and His great work is done” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of

the Last Days. Only by Resolving One’s Notions Can One Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God (1)). From God’s words, I understood that God’s love is different from that of our parents or relatives in that God doesn’t just care for us meticulously without any principles and tolerate everything, nor does He just protect people and keep them safe from illness and disaster. All of this was my mistaken understanding of God’s love. God does not just show His love through mercy, kindness, and bestowing grace upon people. He also uses judgment and chastisement, trials and refinement, and chastening and discipline to help people understand the truth and cast off their corrupt dispositions, allowing them to ultimately live out a human likeness and be saved by Him. After reading God’s words, I was very upset and self-reproachful. I had believed in God for all these years, yet I had no understanding whatsoever as to how He loves and saves people. I only wanted God to give me grace and blessings and shield me from illness and disaster, not accepting His trials and refinement or His purification and perfection. For a full two years, I had lived inside my misunderstanding of God, my heart always closed off to Him. However, God had not treated me based on my rebelliousness and corruption, instead silently bearing my misunderstanding and rebellion and quietly staying by my side, waiting for the day that I would awaken. He also used the brothers and sisters’ experiences to help and support me, guiding me out of my state of misunderstanding and despondency. Understanding God’s intention, my heart was moved by His love, and I was no longer numb and intransigent. I was very remorseful and thought I was quite indebted to God. God had laid out these circumstances to reveal my corruption, to purify and save me, but

I took His good actions as bad and went on misunderstanding and complaining against Him. I was truly so unreasonable! I came before God and prayed to Him, asking Him to forgive me, and saying that I was willing to repent to Him. I also asked Him to enlighten me and guide me to reflect on and try to know myself, and to learn the lessons I ought to learn from this illness.

One day, I read God's words: **"First, when people begin to believe in God, which of them does not have their own aims, motivations, and ambitions? Even though one part of them believes in the existence of God and has seen the existence of God, their belief in God still contains those motivations, and their ultimate aim in believing in God is to receive His blessings and the things they want. In people's life experiences, they often think to themselves: 'I've given up my family and career for God, and what has He given me? I must add it up, and confirm it—have I received any blessings recently? I've given a lot during this time, I've run and run, and have suffered much—has God given me any promises in return? Has He remembered my good deeds? What will my end be? Can I receive God's blessings? ...' Every person constantly makes such calculations within their heart, and they make demands of God which bear their motivations, ambitions, and a transactional mentality. This is to say, in his heart man is constantly testing God, constantly devising plans about God, constantly arguing the case for his own individual outcome with God, and trying to extract a statement from God, seeing whether or not God can give him what he wants. At the same time as pursuing God, man does not treat God as God. Man has always tried to make deals with God, ceaselessly making demands of Him, and even pressing Him at every step, trying to take a mile after being given an inch. At the same time as trying to make deals**

with God, man also argues with Him, and there are even people who, when trials befall them or they find themselves in certain situations, often become weak, negative and slack in their work, and full of complaints about God. From the time when man first began to believe in God, he has considered God to be a cornucopia, a Swiss Army knife, and he has considered himself to be God's greatest creditor, as if trying to get blessings and promises from God were his inherent right and obligation, while God's responsibility were to protect and care for man, and to provide for him. Such is the basic understanding of 'belief in God' of all those who believe in God, and such is their deepest understanding of the concept of belief in God. From man's nature essence to his subjective pursuit, there is nothing that relates to the fear of God. Man's aim in believing in God could not possibly have anything to do with the worship of God. That is to say, man has never considered nor understood that belief in God requires fearing and worshiping God. In light of such conditions, man's essence is obvious. What is this essence? It is that man's heart is malicious, harbors treachery and deceit, does not love fairness and righteousness and that which is positive, and it is contemptible and greedy. Man's heart could not be more closed to God; he has not given it to God at all. God has never seen man's true heart, nor has He ever been worshiped by man. No matter how great the price God pays, or how much work He does, or how much He provides to man, man remains blind and utterly indifferent to it all. Man has never given his heart to God, he only wants to mind his heart himself, to make his own decisions—the subtext of which is that man does not want to follow the way of fearing God and shunning evil, or to submit to the sovereignty and arrangements of God, nor does he want to worship God as God. Such is

the state of man today” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself II). God’s words exposed the despicable motives hidden in my faith in God over the years. From the outset, I was in it to gain blessings and grace. I was able to forsake everything and expend myself for God because I’d seen God cure my liver illness, and I rejoiced thinking that I’d found someone I could rely on the most. I saw God as a great doctor, a safe haven, and I vainly attempted to use superficially forsaking and expending myself to obtain more rewards and blessings from God, such as staying in good health and having a good destination. There was no sincerity or submission in my expending of myself, and it was even less to repay God’s love and satisfy Him. I was using and cheating God, making transactions with Him. I was living by the satanic laws like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Never lift a finger without a reward,” and “One must be rewarded for what they expend.” I had become increasingly selfish and greedy, approaching every matter in terms of my own interests and making calculations with God in everything I did, such as counting how much I had forsaken and paid a price for Him and how many blessings He had given me. When I saw that God had cured my illness, I became energetic in my duty and thought that forsaking anything for God was worthwhile, and when I heard the doctor say that my illness had gotten worse, I wanted to do my duty properly so that God would make my illness disappear. But when I saw that after expending myself for all these years, my illness was not only not improving but also getting increasingly serious, I felt that my desire for blessings was shattered, and I immediately used my years of expending myself as capital to reason and settle accounts with God. I complained about God for being unrighteous toward me, and I was not as devoted to my duty as before. I procrastinated and didn’t give a full effort, and I even wanted to leave my duty behind and go home to recuperate. I

truly had no conscience or reason! I thought of how God had saved me from this wicked and dark world and brought me before Him, using His words to water, supply, and support me. He also used my illness to reveal my corruption, to purify and change me. God had put so much painstaking effort toward me and paid such a price for me. However, after enjoying God's greatest salvation at no cost over these years, not only did I not think to repay God, I even took for granted everything I gained from Him. When I found out that I was in danger of dying from my illness, I immediately turned against God and began to reason and settle accounts with Him, complaining about Him for being unrighteous toward me. I had believed in God for years without treating Him at all like God. I was just a selfish, despicable, and vile person who put profit before everything, and I had no humanity or reason whatsoever.

One time, I read a passage of God's words from an experiential testimony video that really pierced my heart. Almighty God says: **"No matter how they are tried, the allegiance of those who have God in their heart remains unchanged; but for those who do not have God in their heart, once the work of God is not advantageous to their flesh, they change their view of God, and even depart from God. Such are those who will not stand fast in the end, who only seek God's blessings and have no desire to expend themselves for God and dedicate themselves to Him. Such base people will all be expelled when God's work comes to an end, and they are unworthy of any sympathy. Those without humanity are incapable of truly loving God. When the environment is safe and secure, or there are profits to be made, they are totally obedient toward God, but once that which they desire is compromised or finally refuted, they immediately revolt. Even in the space of just one night, they may go from a smiling, 'kind-hearted' person to an ugly-**

looking and ferocious killer, suddenly treating their benefactor of yesterday as their mortal enemy, without rhyme or reason. If these demons are not cast out, these demons that would kill without blinking an eye, will they not become a hidden danger?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Work and Man's Practice). From God's words, I understood that when people who have good humanity and have a conscience and reason see that everything they enjoy is bestowed upon them by God at no cost, they will be willing to do their duties as created beings to repay God's love. At its core, this is something that is perfectly natural and justified, just like how when children are filial to their parents, they are fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations and should not expect compensation or set conditions. Meanwhile, those without humanity thank and praise God when they gain interests and benefits from Him, but when their desire to gain blessings is shattered, they immediately turn against God, reasoning and settling accounts with Him and even standing in opposition to Him, treating Him as an enemy, and openly clamoring with and antagonizing Him. Through what God's words exposed, I saw that I was this exact sort of person who had no humanity. When God cured my illness back then, I thanked Him and was willing to forsake and give up everything, but when I was diagnosed with cirrhosis and was in danger of dying, I immediately turned against God and used my years of forsaking and expending myself as capital to boldly inquire, "Why isn't God caring for me and protecting me after I've forsaken and expended myself so much? Why is He doing the opposite and making my illness get worse? Why is it that all those people who haven't forsaken and expended themselves a lot are in perfect health while I'm stuck with this serious illness? Why are the people who don't believe in God healthy but I'm over here expending myself and forsaking all this while God still isn't making

me get better quickly? Also, when I was arrested by the Communist Party, I didn't deny God and stood firm in my testimony, so why doesn't God get rid of my illness?" Was I not clamoring with God and opposing Him? The implicit meaning behind my words was this: "I've forsaken and expended myself a lot, so God should give me blessings. Only then will I acknowledge God's righteousness. If I can't gain blessings, I won't acknowledge that God is righteous." I was forcing and demanding God to give me blessings, and there was a wicked, vicious disposition in this. At its essence, it was brazenly defying and antagonizing God. Was I not seeking death by doing this? Back in the day, Paul went everywhere spreading the gospel, establishing churches, and doing lots of work, but his motive in forsaking and expending himself was not to satisfy God, and much less was it to do his duty as a created being. Rather, he wanted to use his expending himself and working to demand a crown of righteousness from God, to exchange these for blessings of the kingdom of heaven. His view on pursuit and the path he followed were spurned and condemned by God, and in the end, not only did he not enter the kingdom of heaven, he was sent to hell to receive the punishment he deserved. God's essence is holy and righteous, and He does not determine people's outcomes based on how much they run about and expend themselves. Rather, He decides whether they can be saved based on whether their life disposition is able to change. For someone like me, who is full of satanic corrupt dispositions and brazenly reasons with, clamors with, and antagonizes God when they don't gain blessings, if they don't experience God's judgment and chastisement and His chastening and discipline, then how could they possibly be qualified to enter God's kingdom? In the end, such a person would certainly be sent down to hell to receive punishment like Paul! At this time, I understood that God had used my illness to promptly make me turn back from the mistaken path of

resisting God and to help me reflect on and understand myself and walk the path of pursuing the truth so that I wouldn't resist God and get punished in the end. Understanding God's earnest intention, I felt deeply that this illness was God protecting me, that it was a different kind of blessing. I read more of God's words: **"Everyone's lifespan has been predetermined by God. An illness may appear to be terminal from a medical standpoint, but from God's point of view, if your life must still go on and your time has yet to come, then you couldn't die even if you wanted to. If God has given you a commission, and your mission is not over, then you will not even die from an illness that is supposed to be fatal—God will not take you yet. Even if you do not pray and seek the truth, or do not attend to treating your illness, or even if you put off your treatment, you will not die. This is particularly true for those who have received a commission from God: When their mission has yet to be completed, no matter what illness befalls them, they must not die straight away; they must live until the final moment of the mission's completion"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's words, I understood that man's life and death are in God's hands. God predetermined long ago how long my life would last; it was preordained down to the very second. Even if I was diagnosed with a fatal illness, or if, in people's eyes, everyone in my family had died from liver cancer and there was nothing I could do to escape it, but from God's perspective my time had not yet come and my mission was not yet complete, then He would not let me die, and I wouldn't be able to die. If my mission was complete and my time had arrived, then I'd have to die even if I was in great health and didn't have any illness. This had to do with God's predetermination and was entirely unrelated to my family's history of illness. Recognizing that God holds sovereignty over whether people live or die, I was no longer as constrained by death as I was

before. I was willing to entrust my life and death to God and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements, and my heart felt much more relaxed and liberated.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"When facing illness, you may actively seek treatment, but you should also approach it with a positive attitude. As to how much your illness can be treated and whether it can be cured, and whatever may happen in the end, you should always submit and not complain. This is the attitude you should adopt, for you are a created being and you have no other option. You cannot say, 'If I'm cured of this disease, then I'll believe it is God's great power, but if I'm not cured, then I'll not be happy with God. Why did God give me this disease? Why does He not cure this disease? Why did I get this disease and not someone else? I don't want it! Why do I have to die so early at such a young age? How come other people get to keep on living? Why?' Don't ask why, it is God's orchestration. There is no reason, and you shouldn't ask why. Asking why is rebellious talk, and this is not a question a created being should ask. Don't ask why, there is no why. God has arranged things and planned things like this. If you ask why, then it can only be said that you are too rebellious, too intransigent. When something dissatisfies you, or God does not do as you wish or let you have your way, you become unhappy, you're disgruntled, and you always ask why. So, God asks you, 'As a created being, why haven't you done your duty well? Why haven't you faithfully performed your duty?' And how will you respond? You say, 'There is no why, this is just how I am.' Is that acceptable? (No.) It's acceptable for God to speak to you that way, but it's not acceptable for you to speak to God in that way. You are standing in the wrong position, and you are too senseless. No matter what difficulties a**

created being encounters, it is perfectly natural and justified that you should submit to the arrangements and orchestrations of the Creator. For example, your parents begat you, raised you, and you call them mother and father—this is perfectly natural and justified, and this is how it should be; there is no why. So, God orchestrates all these things for you and, whether you enjoy blessings or suffer hardships, this is also perfectly natural and justified, and you have no choice in the matter. If you can submit until the very end, then you will attain salvation like Peter did. However, if you blame God, abandon God, and betray God because of some temporary illness, then all the relinquishing, the expending, the performing of your duty, and the paying the price you have done before will have been for nothing. This is because all your past hard work will not have laid any foundation for you to perform the duty of a created being well or take your proper place as a created being, and it will not have changed anything about you. This will then cause you to betray God because of your illness, and your end will be as Paul's, to be punished in the end. The reason for this determination is that everything you have done before was so that you can obtain a crown and for the sake of receiving blessings. If, when you finally face illness and death, you are still able to submit without any complaints, it proves that all you did before was done sincerely and willingly for God. You are submissive to God, and ultimately your submission will mark a perfect end to your life of faith in God, and this is commended by God. Therefore, an illness can cause you to have a good end, or it can cause you to have a bad end; the kind of end you come to depends on the path you follow and what your attitude toward God is” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). God speaks with great clarity about how people should practice and what kind of

path they should choose when facing illness. If someone falls ill, they can get treatment, and God does not wish to see people living amidst illness while feeling gloomy, anxious, and worried because of their health, much less does He want to see people not pursuing the truth in the slightest like Paul, lacking the reason that a created being ought to have and using their years of forsaking and expending as capital to make transactions with God when faced with trials and adversity, demanding a crown of righteousness from Him and antagonizing and clamoring with Him only to be punished in the end for resisting Him. What God hopes is that we're able to be like Job when faced with illness, standing in our position as created beings, accepting and submitting to God's sovereignty and arrangements without our own choices and demands. Only this way can someone have reason and humanity. Reflecting on myself, during the trials of this illness, I had been negative, full of misunderstandings and complaints, even standing in opposition to God and antagonizing His sovereignty and orchestrations. I was truly so intransigent and rebellious, and I had none of the reason that a created being should possess. I came before God and prayed to Him, "God, I didn't pursue the truth in the past, always trying to make transactions with You to gain blessings. Now, I have come to understand Your earnest intention. You used my illness to purify and change me, to reverse my mistaken views on pursuit. I'm willing to submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements. Although I don't have Job's humanity, I'm willing to follow his example and stand firm in my testimony for You. If I continue to complain to You, I ask that You curse me." Afterward, I was able to correctly regard my illness. I took medicine when I was supposed to, and I wasn't so constrained by my condition and could do my duty normally.

Later on, I went to the hospital for another check-up, and the doctor said that the earlier diagnosis of cirrhosis had been a bit premature and that

the tubercles in my liver hadn't developed much. The doctor told me to come back for regular check-ups so that they could continue observing the tubercles' development. However, since I had a police record for belief in God and couldn't show my identity card, I wasn't able to go to the hospital for testing for more than three years. At the beginning of this year, a sister who worked at a hospital helped me do some lab tests. When the test results were out, the doctor said that my liver function, as well as the various levels, were normal. Hearing this, I was very thankful to God.

While experiencing the revelations of this illness, although I suffered a lot, I gained some understanding about my motive of gaining blessings in my faith in God as well as my satanic disposition of viciousness. Through experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words, my mistaken views in my faith in God were somewhat transformed. Now, even though my illness isn't completely cured, I'm able to show some reason and willing to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. That I've been able to change in this small way is all because of the judgment and chastisement of God's words. Thank God!

50. Pretense Has Ruined Me

By Zheng Xinjing, China

Dear Sister,

I hope this letter finds you well!

Last time you wrote to ask about my gains from doing my duties away from home over the past year. I have indeed experienced some things and gained some understanding of my corrupt disposition. Today, I want to share an experience I went through last summer.

At that time, Sister Mali and I were collaborating in the watering duty. Although Mali had just started with this duty, she was diligent, eager to learn, and simply opened up to seek help when she encountered problems she didn't understand. At first, Mali's questions were relatively simple, and I answered them actively and readily. Mali admired me, saying that I had a good grasp of principles, which made me quite pleased. Later, as Mali became more familiar with principles, she'd ask questions that I didn't fully understand, and even when I had some opinions, I wasn't sure if they were correct. I was afraid that if I answered incorrectly, Mali might look down on me, and think that I couldn't even see such issues clearly, and that I didn't understand the truth or the principles, which made me anxious whenever she asked questions. There were some questions I wasn't clear on, so I would pretend not to have heard because I had headphones on, focusing intently on my computer and moving the mouse as if I were deeply engrossed in my work. Other sisters, thinking I hadn't heard or was busy with something else, would answer Mali's questions. At that time, I thought I was quite clever—this way, my shortcomings wouldn't be noticed by the others, and I wouldn't have to worry about losing face by giving a wrong

answer. However, I also felt a little guilty. When Mali asked questions, she was genuinely seeking help, but I intentionally ignored her. Wasn't this deceitful? Moreover, even if I didn't understand something, I should be honest and seek and fellowship about solutions together with others, which would benefit both the work and my own entry. But out of fear of misspeaking and losing face, I chose to remain silent.

Sister, do you know? At that time, I felt like such a hypocrite, wearing a mask every day and not daring to show my true self, fearing exposure of my issues and being belittled.

Later, I encountered difficulties in my duty as well, and when newcomers raised questions that I didn't know how to solve, I felt anxious. I wanted to open up in fellowship and seek help from brothers and sisters, but I was afraid that if I did, they might think I couldn't solve such basic problems and didn't understand the truth. Mali had previously praised my grasp of principles, so she might think she had misjudged me. I knew if I didn't speak up, the newcomers' issues wouldn't be resolved, and that their lives would suffer! But opening up about my difficulties felt especially hard. I felt that proactively revealing my shortcomings would make me appear weak. Ultimately, I couldn't bring myself to speak up. Because I didn't dare to disclose my difficulties, the newcomers' problems went unresolved, some even stopped attending gatherings, and I felt inadequate in my duty. I fell into a negative state, which was very painful. During that time, I longed so much to talk freely about my difficulties and my state without any concerns. I also asked myself, "Why is it so difficult to speak the truth and about facts and to act in a straightforward way?"

Once, Mali and I were discussing whether a sister could be cultivated to water newcomers, and I shared my viewpoint. Afterward, I reflected on

the principles and realized that my viewpoint was somewhat inaccurate and might misguide Mali. I panicked a bit and thought, “What should I do now? Should I correct this? If I don’t say anything, Mali won’t know that I misunderstood the principles, and I won’t lose face in front of her. But if I do that, and we end up cultivating an unsuitable person, wouldn’t it be irresponsible toward the work and harmful to the brothers and sisters?” At that moment, I felt caught in a dilemma that couldn’t be undone. Then I thought of these words of God: **“Making a fool of yourself is a good thing. It helps you to see your own deficiencies and your love of vanity. It shows you where your problems lie and it helps you to understand clearly that you are not a perfect person. There are no perfect people and making a fool of yourself is very normal. All people experience times where they make a fool of themselves or are embarrassed. All people fail, experience setbacks, and have weaknesses. Making a fool of yourself is not bad. ... You may make a fool of yourself, others may make fools of themselves, everyone may make a fool of themselves—eventually you will discover that everyone is the same, all are ordinary people, all mortals, that no one is greater than anyone else, and no one is any better than anyone else. Everyone makes a fool of themselves sometimes, so no one should make fun of anyone else. Once you have experienced numerous failures, you gradually mature in your humanity; so whenever you encounter these things again, you will no longer be constrained, and they will not have an impact on the normal performance of your duty. Your humanity will be normal, and when your humanity is normal, your reason will be normal too”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). God’s words made me realize that none of us are perfect and that everyone has shortcomings. There will always be times when we deviate or appear foolish in what we do and how

we view problems. These things are perfectly normal. However, I didn't see myself as an ordinary person and couldn't properly face my own deficiencies and shortcomings. Even though I didn't fully grasp the truth principles and my advice to Mali contained some deviations and misguided her, I was reluctant to honestly admit my shortcomings, fearing that she would think I didn't understand the truth and look down on me. In order to save face, I tried to cover up my problems, which was irresponsible toward the church work and the life entry of the brothers and sisters. I was truly deceitful! Realizing this, I opened up to Mali about the corrupt disposition I had revealed in this matter, corrected the erroneous viewpoints I had previously shared, and then proposed that we select people again according to the principles. Sister, although I lost face this time, by acting according to God's words, I didn't make matters worse, and my conscience was at ease.

Later, when summarizing the work, I mustered up the courage to fellowship about my state and the difficulties I had encountered in my work. The sisters read God's words to me to help resolve my state. Almighty God says: **"What kind of disposition is it when people always put up a front, always whitewash themselves, always put on airs so that others think highly of them, and cannot see their faults or shortcomings, when they always try to present their best side to people? This is arrogance, fakery, hypocrisy, it is the disposition of Satan, it is something wicked"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). **"Antichrists believe that if they talk too much, constantly expressing their views and fellowshiping with others, everyone will see through them; they will think the antichrist lacks depth, is just an ordinary person, and won't respect them. What does losing respect mean to the antichrist? It means the loss of their esteemed status in the hearts of others, appearing mediocre, ignorant,**

and ordinary. This is what antichrists do not hope to see. Therefore, when they see others in the church always opening up and admitting their negativity, rebellion against God, the mistakes they made yesterday, or the unbearable pain they feel from not being honest today, the antichrist considers these people foolish and naive, as they never admit such things themselves, keeping their thoughts hidden. Some people speak infrequently because of poor caliber or simple-mindedness, a lack of complex thoughts, but when antichrists speak infrequently, it's not for the same reason; it's a problem of disposition. They rarely speak when meeting others and don't readily express their views on matters. Why don't they express their views? Firstly, they certainly lack the truth and can't see through things. If they speak, they might make mistakes and be seen through themselves; they fear being looked down upon, so they pretend to be silent and feign profundity, making it hard for others to gauge them, appearing wise and distinguished. With this facade, people dare not underestimate the antichrist, and seeing their seemingly calm and composed exterior, they hold them in even higher regard and dare not slight them. This is the devious and wicked aspect of antichrists. They don't readily express their views because most of their views are not in line with the truth, but are merely human notions and imaginings, not worthy of being brought out into the open. So, they remain silent. Inside they hope to obtain some light which they can release to gain admiration, but since they lack this, they stay quiet and hidden during fellowship of the truth, lurking in the shadows like a ghost waiting for an opportunity. When they find others speaking forth the light, they figure out ways to make it their own, expressing it in another manner to show off. This is how cunning antichrists are. No matter what they do, they strive to

stand out and be superior, as only then do they feel pleased. If they don't have the opportunity, they first lie low, and keep their views to themselves. This is the cunningness of antichrists" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). I saw God's revelation about antichrists, that they do not understand the truth and never lay themselves bare in interactions with others, fearing the exposure of their shortcomings and deficiencies and losing their status or image in the hearts of others, so they pretend to be profound and noble, going to great lengths to conceal and disguise themselves, making it hard for people to see through them. They act deviously and have a wicked disposition—this is the nature essence of an antichrist. My state and behavior were the same as those of an antichrist, and I often disguised myself to save face and protect my status. Thinking back to when Mali first came, she asked relatively simple questions, and answering these did not expose my shortcomings, so I could answer readily, earning praise from her. As Mali mastered some principles, she started asking questions that I could not fully understand. I feared that if my answers were inaccurate, the brothers and sisters would see through me and I would lose the image they had of me. To avoid losing face, I employed a tactic of evasion, pretending to be busy or not to have heard the question to cover for my shortcomings, even attempting to cover up when my answers had deviations. Even when I faced difficulties in my duty and couldn't resolve them, leading to delays in work and I became passive and weak, I still avoided opening up and seeking help. I worried that if the brothers and sisters knew of my shortcomings, they would think I didn't understand the truth and look down on me. My lack of transparency in my work, constant protection of my face and image, and my pretending to be profound and grand, and disguising myself to mislead others—these were manifestations of an antichrist disposition! Sister, after reading God's words, I realized

how hypocritical and deceitful my nature was, and how serious my antichrist disposition was. I felt fear and disgust toward my corrupt disposition, and I prayed to God, “God, I have been disguising myself constantly to maintain my image and status in the hearts of others, and I have had no human likeness, which makes You detest me. God, my corruption is so deep. I pray that You save me and help me recognize myself and cast off my corrupt disposition.”

One day, I read a passage of God’s words, which gave me some understanding of the root of my corrupt disposition. Almighty God says: **“When family elders often tell you that ‘People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark,’ it is to make you attach importance to having a good reputation, living a proud life, and not doing things that heap disgrace upon you. So does this saying guide people in a positive or negative way? Can it lead you to the truth? Can it lead you to understand the truth? (No, it cannot.) You can say with all certainty, ‘No, it cannot!’ Think about it, God says that people should comport themselves as honest people. When you have transgressed, or done something wrong, or done something that rebels against God and goes against the truth, you need to admit your mistake, gain an understanding of yourself, and keep dissecting yourself in order to achieve true repentance, and thereafter act in accordance with God’s words. So, if people are to comport themselves as honest people, does that conflict with the saying ‘People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark’? (Yes.) How does it conflict? The saying ‘People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark’ is intended to make people attach importance to living out their bright and colorful side and doing more things that make them look good—rather than doing things that are bad or dishonorable, or exposing their ugly side—and to prevent**

them from living without pride or dignity. For the sake of one's reputation, for the sake of pride and honor, one cannot rubbish everything about oneself, let alone tell others about one's dark side and shameful aspects, because one must live with pride and dignity. In order to have dignity one needs a good reputation, and to have a good reputation one needs to put up a pretense and dress oneself up. Doesn't this conflict with comporting oneself as an honest person? (Yes.) When you comport yourself as an honest person, what you are doing is completely at odds with the saying 'People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark.' ... But when you don't understand this truth, and don't understand God's intentions, the things that are conditioned into you by your family tend to dominate. So when you do something wrong, you cover it up and put up a pretense, thinking, 'I can't say anything about this, and I won't allow anyone else who knows about it to say anything either. If any of you say anything, I won't let you off lightly. My reputation comes first. Living is for nothing if not for the sake of one's reputation, because it's more important than anything else. If a person loses their reputation, they lose all their dignity. So you can't tell it like it is, you have to pretend, you have to cover things up, otherwise you will lose your reputation and dignity, and your life will be worthless. If no one respects you, then you're just worthless, cheap trash.' Is it possible to comport yourself as an honest person by practicing this way? Is it possible to be completely open and dissect yourself? (No, it isn't.) Obviously, by doing this you are adhering to the saying 'People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark' that your family has conditioned into you. However, if you let go of this saying in order to pursue the truth and practice the truth, it will cease to affect you, and it will cease to be your motto or your principle for doing

things, and instead what you do will be precisely the opposite of this saying ‘People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark.’ You won’t be living for the sake of your reputation, nor for the sake of your dignity, but rather, you will be living for the sake of pursuing the truth, and comporting yourself as an honest person, and seeking to satisfy God and live as a true created being. If you adhere to this principle, you will have let go of the conditioning effects that your family exerts on you” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (12)).

Through the exposure of God’s words, I realized that I had been living according to the saying “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark,” which I took as my life motto. Since childhood, my parents taught me “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark,” that “Face is priceless,” and that “One must not lose face no matter what.” Influenced by my parents’ long-term teachings and erroneous ideas, I came to view face as the most important thing, believing that living with dignity and respect meant gaining face and earning people’s admiration and praise. I remember when I was in school, during a music class, I was asked to sing on stage. A classmate said I sang as if I were reading a text. I felt publicly humiliated, as if I had been slapped, and wished I could disappear into a crack in the ground. From then on, I never sang again, so others wouldn’t discover that I sang off-key. After I began to believe in God, I knew that God values honesty, but I continued to live by the satanic philosophy of “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark.” I weighed action and word by its impact on my face and status. If it revealed my shortcomings and caused embarrassment, I would go to great lengths to conceal and disguise myself, even preferring to delay church work and harm brothers and sisters, than to lose face. I became slick, deceitful, and selfish, and lived without any true human likeness. The opportunity God gave me to perform my duties was

meant to help me seek the truth and resolve actual issues. Despite my many shortcomings, if I could let go of my pride, open up, and seek fellowship, I would gain some understanding and entry into the truth, and increasingly master the principles to perform my duties well. However, I was too concerned with my face and status. When facing difficulties, I didn't open up, seek, or openly fellowship on my incorrect viewpoints, resulting in unresolved issues, no progress being made in the truth or principles, and many missed opportunities to gain the truth. I valued my face more than anything else, and wasn't even able to speak a word of honesty for the sake of my image. I lived without any dignity, which not only delayed my life entry but also harmed the church's work. I no longer wanted to live bound by my corrupt dispositions and was willing to practice the truth and be an honest person.

Later, during my devotionals, I read God's words and found a path to practice. Almighty God says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be**

able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). “If you want to comport yourself as an honest person, don’t attach importance to pride; a person’s pride isn’t worth a cent. Faced with the truth, one should expose oneself, not put up a pretense or create a false image. One must reveal to God one’s true thoughts, the mistakes one has made, the aspects that violate the truth principles, and so on, and also lay these things bare to one’s brothers and sisters. It is not a matter of living for the sake of one’s reputation, but rather, it is a matter of living for the sake of comporting oneself as an honest person, living for the sake of pursuing the truth, living for the sake of being a true created being, and living for the sake of satisfying God and being saved. ... You won’t be living for the sake of your reputation, nor for the sake of your dignity, but rather, you will be living for the sake of pursuing the truth, and comporting yourself as an honest person, and seeking to satisfy God and live as a true created being. If you adhere to this principle, you will have let go of the conditioning effects that your family exerts on you” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (12)). God’s words made me understand the principles of practice of how to conduct oneself as a person. God likes honest people. Whether interacting with others or doing our duties, we should not disguise or cover up our shortcomings and inadequacies for the sake of our face and status. Even if we make mistakes or don’t understand the truth and can’t see things clearly, we shouldn’t hide or cover it up.

Instead, we should be open and honest, admit what we can't see clearly, and speak according to our understanding. If the suggestions or viewpoints we offer have deviations, we should face them calmly and accept the guidance from brothers and sisters, rather than living for the sake of our face. Opening up about our difficulties and shortcomings is not a shameful thing, nor is it a sign of weakness. It is a manifestation of seeking the truth. Correctly facing our shortcomings and letting go of our pride to practice the truth makes us straightforward and facilitates quicker entry into truth reality. After reading these words from God, I felt I had a path to practice. I prayed to God, "God, I am not an honest person. I have done many hypocritical and deceitful things to save face, which makes You sick and disgusted. I wish to repent, pursue the truth, and be an honest person."

One day, while I was doing my duty with several brothers and sisters, Mali asked a question seeking fellowship. After listening, I felt it was a bit challenging and was unsure whether my view was appropriate. I began to feel nervous again, thinking, "Should I answer or not? If I don't answer well, won't I lose face? Maybe I should wait for the other sisters to answer." But then I thought, "If I continue to keep silent, evade, and disguise myself to save face, I will still be living according to a corrupt disposition." I recalled this passage of God's words: **"How is your experience of being honest people going now? Have you achieved a few results? (Sometimes I practice being honest, but sometimes I forget.) Can you forget to practice the truth? If you can forget it, what kind of problem does that illustrate? Do you love the truth or not? If you do not love the truth, it will be difficult for you to enter into the truth reality. You must take practicing the truth and practicing being an honest person seriously. You should frequently contemplate how to be an honest person and what reason you ought to possess. God demands that people be honest,**

and they should pursue honesty as a matter of utmost importance. They should be clear on and understand what truths they need to possess and what realities they need to enter into in order to be honest individuals and to live out the likeness of Peter, and they must find a path of practice. Only then will they have any hope of becoming an honest person and someone that God loves” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. The Path of Resolving a Corrupt Disposition). I silently prayed to God in my heart, telling Him that this time I could no longer be constrained by my pride. I needed to be open and honest. Then, I spoke up and shared my views and opinions. After I finished, other sisters added their thoughts based on what I had fellowshiped. Through everyone’s fellowship, Mali’s problem was resolved, and a smile appeared on her face. At that moment, when I spoke up in fellowship, I felt a tremendous sense of relief. It felt like I had finally broken free from the constraints of vanity and pride and taken a step toward being an honest person. Later, when Mali asked more questions, I sometimes still feared making mistakes and losing face. Whenever I realized this, I prayed to God for help to rebel against myself, set aside my pride, and actively answer the sister’s questions. Sometimes my viewpoints were wrong, or there would be problems I couldn’t see clearly and my answers would be inaccurate, and the sisters would offer additional fellowship. Although this sometimes made me feel a bit embarrassed, listening carefully to their fellowship clarified and improved my understanding. When encountering difficulties or problems in my duty, I also sought fellowship from brothers and sisters. They did not look down on or belittle me but patiently fellowshiped the truth to help me. I felt the release and ease that came from practicing honesty, and I found it much better to conduct myself this way. Thank God!

Sister, that's about all for my experiences. I hope you will also write to me about your experiences and gains over the past year.

Sincerely,

Xinjing

June 10, 2023

51. Regarding the Lord's Return, to Whom Should One Listen?

By Hannah, Myanmar

Who should we listen to regarding welcoming the Lord's return? Should we listen to the voice of God, or our pastors? I never understood this in my faith before, but blindly listened to my pastor and nearly missed my chance to welcome the Lord's return. In June 2017, I met Sister Mindy and Brother Decker from Germany on Facebook. Through our communication, I saw that they were modest and dependable people with a pure understanding of the Bible and enlightening fellowship. I gained a lot. We had a few gatherings and I learned a lot of truths I'd never understood before, like what true belief and true repentance are, what following and submitting to God is, what following and submitting to people is, the essence and root of the Pharisees resisting the Lord Jesus, how to listen for God's voice and welcome the Lord, and more. I felt like I gained a lot of sustenance from this and it brightened my heart. I enjoyed these gatherings. In one of them, Decker read a couple of Bible verses: **"For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation"** (Luke 17:24–25). He said that in the last days, the Lord incarnates again as the Son of man to come and work and that this prophecy was already fulfilled some time ago. He said, "The Lord has returned as Almighty God incarnate, and He's expressing truths and doing the work of judgment beginning with God's house. Almighty God has expressed all truths which purify and save mankind and it's like a great light shining from the East, and this is the 'lightning' from the East." I was a bit shocked to

hear this. I thought, “The Lord Jesus already returned?” Then I remembered what the clergy said, that only Eastern Lightning bears witness that God has returned in the flesh and that we shouldn’t believe it because only the Lord Jesus is Christ. I was really unsettled after that and couldn’t focus on Decker’s fellowship. I thought, “The pastor and elders serve God and know the Bible well. They should have a clear understanding about such a major event as the Lord’s return, so I’ll go ask them first.”

I went to church and asked the pastor that Sunday, and he said, “There’s value in what believers in Almighty God preach but they testify that the Lord has returned as Almighty God in the flesh. That’s not possible. Only our Lord Jesus is God incarnate, so they believe in a human being. Their church is oppressed by the Chinese Communist government and believing in Eastern Lightning would be a betrayal of the Lord Jesus.” Hearing this sent a wave of fear through me. I figured if that was the case then Mindy and Decker must have strayed from the Lord’s way. I started to develop suspicions about them and got my guard up and didn’t dare to meet with them anymore. But I hesitated when I thought about their testimony that the Lord Jesus has returned. If that were true and I didn’t look into it, wouldn’t I be abandoned by the Lord? But then again, if Almighty God were God incarnate, why wouldn’t the pastor accept that, but say they believe in a person? I figured the pastor knew the Bible and understood more than me so I should stay away from Mindy and Decker to avoid going astray. But after I got home I felt really restless and ill at ease. I was miserable and felt gloomy. I said a prayer to the Lord, “Oh Lord, I listened to the pastor today and now I’ve begun to suspect and guard against Mindy and Decker. I’m afraid to look into Eastern Lightning any further. Lord, I’m longing for Your return, but I’m afraid of taking the wrong path and betraying You. I really don’t know what I should do. Please enlighten and

guide me so I know right from wrong.” I gradually gained a sense of peace after my prayer and then something Mindy once fellowshiped sprung to mind, “In our faith we must honor God as great and all things must be based on God’s words, especially when it comes to something as important as investigating the true way. If we do things according to human words, just listen to and consult other people in everything, then we’re believing in and following people, which is straying from the Lord’s way.” Then I started reflecting on myself. When I heard the Lord had returned, I didn’t pray to seek the Lord’s intention first or see what the Lord’s words say about it or whether this way came from God. Instead I worshiped the pastor and listened to him. That’s not in line with the Lord’s intention. In every gathering I’d been in with the brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God, their fellowship was well grounded and in line with the Bible, and was illuminating. Their explanations of God’s intentions were clear. I’d understood so many truths I’d never known before from just a few gatherings and I felt I’d become closer to God and that my faith had grown. This was clearly from God and had the Holy Spirit’s work. But I didn’t look at whether the Church had the Holy Spirit’s work or the sustenance of the truth. Instead, I just figured the pastor knew the Bible well, and I determined whether the Lord had returned based on what the pastor said. I was certain The Church of Almighty God had the truth and the Holy Spirit’s work but I still didn’t dare look into it. Wasn’t that believing in the pastor? How was that believing in or following God? I thought of when the Lord Jesus appeared and worked. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees who served God in the temple all knew the Scriptures and the laws inside and out but they didn’t recognize the Lord Jesus as the coming Messiah. Instead, they madly opposed and condemned Him and had Him crucified. I realized that being well-versed in the Bible isn’t the same as knowing God,

and if I blindly listened to the pastor, that would go against God's intention and I might oppose Him! With these thoughts, I decided to keep attending gatherings with Mindy and Decker and if I determined that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, I would accept and follow Him.

In the next gathering I shared my confusions with them. Decker said, "Is there any basis for what your pastor said, that The Church of Almighty God believes in a person? Has he read Almighty God's words or looked into His work? Isn't he afraid of resisting God by judging and condemning the Church blindly like this? The Pharisees judged the Lord Jesus to be just a regular person. They didn't listen to the truths He expressed, but wildly opposed and condemned Him and ended up colluding in His crucifixion, earning God's punishment. Today's clergy members don't look at whether Almighty God's words are the truth, whether they're the voice of God, but just deny and condemn Him. Isn't that the same mistake the Pharisees made? Whether Almighty God really is God incarnate, whether He is the Lord Jesus returned, isn't determined by the approval or disapproval of the religious world or any government. Rather, we have to see whether Almighty God's words are the truth and if He does God's work. This is the key." To better explain the incarnation, Decker read me a few passages of Almighty God's words: **"The 'incarnation' is God's appearance in the flesh; God works among created mankind in the image of the flesh. So for God to be incarnated, He must first be flesh, flesh with normal humanity; this is the most basic prerequisite. In fact, the implication of God's incarnation is that God lives and works in the flesh, that God in His very essence becomes flesh, becomes a man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of the Flesh Inhabited by God). **"God become flesh is called Christ, and so the Christ that can give people the truth is called God. There is nothing excessive about this, for He possesses the**

essence of God, and possesses God's disposition, and wisdom in His work, that are unattainable by man. Those who call themselves christ, yet cannot do the work of God, are frauds. Christ is not merely the manifestation of God on earth, but also the particular flesh assumed by God as He carries out and completes His work among man. This flesh cannot be supplanted by just any man, but is a flesh that can adequately bear God's work on earth, and express the disposition of God, and well represent God, and provide man with life" (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). **"He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of God, and He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God's incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or not it is God's incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant"** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Preface).

Decker then shared this fellowship, "God incarnate is God's Spirit clothed in flesh. He becomes a regular person, speaking and working on

earth to save mankind. God incarnate appears very normal, very ordinary. He possesses normal humanity and eats and dresses normally just like anyone else, and He has normal human emotions. However, His essence is divine. He can express the truth to nourish people according to their needs at any time and any place. He does God's own work and He expresses God's disposition and what God has and is. This is something no created being could do. That's just like the Lord Jesus, who looked like a regular person, but expressed the truth and brought the way of repentance. He forgave man's sins and expressed God's dispositions of mercy and lovingkindness. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and performed many signs and wonders like feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, calming the wind and sea with a single word, raising the dead, and more. He displayed the power and authority of God. He was ultimately nailed to the cross, completing His work of redeeming mankind from sin. We can see from the Lord's work and words and the dispositions He expressed that He was God incarnate—He was Christ. God has once again become flesh in the last days as Almighty God. Just like the Lord Jesus, He looks like a normal person from the outside, and really lives among mankind, but Almighty God expresses all truths which cleanse and save mankind. He does God's judgment work of the last days to purify and save mankind, completely setting them free from the bondage of sin and leading them into God's kingdom. Almighty God's words unlock all the mysteries of God's management plan to save mankind. That includes the truth of God's three stages of work in the Ages of Law, Grace, and Kingdom and what they achieve, the mysteries of God's names and His incarnation, the significance of God's judgment in the last days, how God ends the age and sorts people according to their kind, different people's outcomes and destinations, how Christ's kingdom will be realized on earth, and more. Almighty God has

also revealed the truth of our corruption by Satan and our God-resisting satanic nature, so we can know our satanic dispositions like arrogance, conceit, crookedness, deceitfulness, selfishness and despicableness. He has also revealed God's righteous, unoffendable disposition to us and shown us the specific path to change our dispositions, and much more. Who aside from God could express the truth and unlock the mysteries of God's management plan? Who else could do judgment work to cleanse and save mankind? Who else could reveal God's righteous, unoffendable disposition? And who else could determine people's outcomes and destinations? Only God in the flesh can do this kind of practical work for mankind's salvation. Almighty God's work and words are all done on the foundation of the Lord Jesus' work of redemption. This is a newer, higher stage of work. This completely fulfills the Lord Jesus' prophecies: **'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth'** (John 16:12–13). **'I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and accepts not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day'** (John 12:47–48). The truths expressed by Almighty God, His judgment work, and the dispositions He shows all prove that Almighty God is God in the flesh, He is the Lord Jesus returned. He is Christ appearing in the last days. We can't go by appearance when determining if He's Christ. What's key is whether He can express the truth, and whether He can redeem and save mankind."

Decker's fellowship was really enlightening for me. God incarnate is God in heaven clothed in the flesh of a regular person. He looks normal and ordinary, but He has God's essence. He can express the truth and do God's own work. This is something no human being possesses or can do. Who

else but God incarnate could so clearly explain the mysteries of the incarnation? Without reading Almighty God's truths, judging only by appearances, it is indeed easy to mistake Christ for an ordinary person, leading to rejection and opposition against God!

Then Mindy shared some fellowship. She said, "Almighty God's appearance and work totally fulfill the Bible's prophecies. He is the Lord Jesus returned. A lot of true believers from many denominations have read Almighty God's words and have made certain that they're the truth and God's voice, and they've turned toward Almighty God. His work and words have rocked the entire religious world. Clergy members have definitely heard about or seen this, so why wouldn't they seek and look into Almighty God's work and read His words? Why do they insist on resisting and condemning Him? Back then the Pharisees knew clearly that the Lord Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, preached the way of repentance, and that it came from God, but they consciously denied Him, saying He was a Nazarene, a son of a carpenter. They madly opposed and condemned Him and colluded with the Roman government to have Him crucified. They denied and condemned Christ. They were His enemies. They were antichrists revealed by God's work. Almighty God has appeared and is working in the last days and now pastors and elders know that He expresses truths to do the work of judgment of the last days. Not only do they refuse to seek and investigate it, but they spread heresies and fallacies to deny and condemn Almighty God. In their churches they spread the CCP's baseless rumors and devilish words slandering and condemning The Church of Almighty God and they join forces with the atheistic Party to oppose Him. How are they any different from the Pharisees who opposed the Lord Jesus? The Bible says: 'For many misleaders are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a misleader and an

antichrist' (2 John 1:7). 'Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world' (1 John 4:3). The clergy deny Christ, condemning and opposing Christ of the last days and stubbornly resisting God. Aren't they antichrists revealed by God's work in the last days?"

My misgivings were finally cleared up by Mindy's fellowship. I realized the clergy members know nothing about Christ or the incarnation. They believe in the Lord Jesus, but they don't know His essence at all. The Lord Jesus has returned to work in the flesh, expressing so many truths, but they don't seek or look into it, much less acknowledge that the Lord has returned. They just recklessly condemn and oppose Him. They are enemies of God! I knew I couldn't follow them anymore but had to accept Almighty God's work and keep pace with God's footsteps. I was resolved to follow Almighty God no matter how my pastor might harass and mislead me.

My pastor found out about my faith in Almighty God before long. He immediately flew into a rage, berating me for believing in Almighty God. He said I was believing in a person, that it was wrong, and got my husband to try to change my mind. My husband had no discernment over the pastor's devilish words, so he started standing in the way of my faith. It was like he was a different person. He'd blow his top and throw things around whenever he found out I'd been in a gathering and he even neglected our family business trying to force me to give up my faith. That was really painful for me. The pastor's wife was trying to stop me, too. She'd stay at my house for hours at a time and I couldn't read God's words because I had to keep her company. I couldn't even keep up with housework. It was all really unsettling for me.

The pastor's actions really made me mad. He wouldn't seek or look into the Lord Jesus' return and he tried to mislead me with heresies and fallacies, to keep me from accepting the true way. He even incited and used my husband to get in my way so that I would lose God's salvation. How despicable! I thought of the Lord Jesus exposing and condemning the Pharisees: **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in"** (Matthew 23:13). I felt like modern-day pastors and elders are just like that. They won't hear God's voice and welcome the Lord and they spread baseless rumors and fallacies to mislead and hinder those of us who want to welcome the Lord and enter God's kingdom. They want us to go to hell and be punished with them, to be buried along with them. They're our stumbling blocks on the path to the kingdom of heaven. They're soul-devouring antichrists and demons! Just as Almighty God says: **"There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of 'sound constitution,' but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). I saw through the pastor's hypocritical, truth-hating essence and became even more motivated to follow Almighty God. I'd always idolized the pastors, and I never imagined that these people who know the Bible well and serve God are actually truth-hating antichrists who block believers' entry into God's kingdom. If it hadn't been for Almighty God appearing and working in the flesh, revealing these evil servants and antichrists hidden in the churches, the pastor would've misled and ruined me without me even knowing it. It's God's mercy and salvation that I could accept Almighty God's work of the last days!

After that, I leaned on God and stood firm in my witness, and my husband stopped standing in my way. Now I attend gatherings with brothers and sisters, fellowship about God's word together, and I also begin to do my duty in the church. I'm filled with peace and joy. Thanks be to Almighty God!

52. Learning to Accept Guidance and Supervision

By Lin Yuqian, China

In June 2022, I was elected as the team leader responsible for video work. After some time, I got the hang of the work and was able to keep track of and grasp the team members' states and the work progress. Although I was still lacking in my skills, I felt that I could handle the work.

One day, the leader came to understand the team's work situation. I happened to have recently understood the reasons for the slow progress of the work, such as the lack of close cooperation among team members, disagreements that needed communication and on which no consensus was reached, which later led to rework and delays in progress, and some cumbersome processes that also delayed progress. After understanding these situations, I'd fellowshiped and corrected them, and I reported these situations to the leader. I thought that since I had done some actual work, the leader would say I had done a good job. But to my surprise, as soon as I finished speaking, the leader asked me, "Why can't the team members cooperate harmoniously? What are their main problems?" Faced with this question, I didn't know how to answer because I really didn't understand the reasons. I wasn't sure where they were stuck; I could only see from the surface that they couldn't cooperate closely. Next, the leader asked some more questions, and I still couldn't answer. The leader then said to me, "Are you just listening to whatever the brothers and sisters tell you without discovering the root problems from what they report? Can you actually solve problems like this?" Hearing the leader say this, I felt embarrassed. I couldn't help thinking, "Aren't you implying that I don't know how to solve problems? It sounds like I don't know how to manage the work." Then, the leader pointed out that I was only scratching the surface of problems and

couldn't solve them at the root, and incorporated principles into fellowshiping with me, helping me understand that in doing work, one must learn to grasp the main and key issues. I felt somewhat unconvinced: I had tried my best to discover problems and communicate with the team members, and it was not like I didn't know how to manage the work. I stared at the computer with a sullen face, not wanting to engage with the leader. When typing, I deliberately hit the keyboard hard to vent my dissatisfaction, thinking, "The leader said this in front of my two coworkers, how will others see me? Why did she only point out my problems? Are the other coworkers doing their job perfectly?" I felt the leader's words seemed to negate all my efforts. The more I thought about it, the angrier I became. I felt the leader was being too harsh with me.

After the meeting, recalling the leader's criticisms made me feel very humiliated. I guessed my coworkers would definitely think I was not good at my work, so I was somewhat peeved and thought, "From now on, I won't work so hard on my duty since no one can see it anyway! Next time the leader asks questions, I won't be so eager to answer." I was feeling very low, filled with anger and grievance, wanting to cry. In the evening, I read a sentence in a letter written by a coworker, "If brothers and sisters genuinely want to do their duty well, they should be willing to accept it when their leaders follow up to supervise the work and point out their problems and deviations promptly." Reading this sentence, I felt very ashamed. Faced with the leader's supervision and pointers, I was not sad for not doing my duty well but was angry because the leader spoke without considering my pride. In what way was I a person who was sincerely doing my duty? I came before God and prayed, "God, today the leader pointed out my problems, and I felt resistant. I know this attitude is not in line with Your

intention, but what lessons should I learn, and how should I reflect on and know myself? May You enlighten and guide me.”

The next morning, I read these words of God: **“It is a wonderful thing if you can accept God’s house supervising, observing, and trying to understand you. It is of help to you in fulfilling your duty, in being able to do your duty in a way that is up to standard and to satisfy God’s intentions. It benefits and helps you, without any downside at all. Once you have understood this principle, should you not then no longer have any feelings of resistance or guardedness against the supervision of leaders, workers, and God’s chosen people? Even though sometimes someone tries to understand you, observes you, and supervises your work, this is not something to take personally. Why do I say this? Because the tasks that are now yours, the duty you perform, and any work that you do are not the private affairs or personal job of any one person; they touch on the work of God’s house and relate to one part of God’s work. Therefore, when anyone spends a little time supervising or observing you, or gets to understand you on a deep level, trying to have a heart-to-heart with you and find out what your state has been like during this time, and even sometimes when their attitude is a little harsher, and they prune, discipline, and reproach you a bit, this is all because they have a conscientious and responsible attitude toward the work of the house of God. You should not have any negative thoughts or emotions toward this. What does it mean if you can accept it when others supervise, observe, and try to understand you? That, in your heart, you accept the scrutiny of God. If you do not accept people’s supervision, observation, and attempts to understand you—if you push back against all this—are you able to accept the scrutiny of God? The scrutiny of God is more detailed, in-depth, and accurate than when**

people try to understand you; God's requirements are more specific, exacting, and in-depth. If you cannot accept being supervised by God's chosen people, are your claims that you can accept God's scrutiny not empty words? For you to be able to accept God's scrutiny and examination, you must first accept being supervised by the house of God, the leaders and workers, or the brothers and sisters. ... A leader supervising your work is a good thing. Why? Because it means they are taking responsibility for the church's work; this is their duty, their responsibility. Being able to fulfill this responsibility proves they are a competent leader, a good leader. If you were given complete freedom and human rights, and you could do whatever you wanted, follow your desires, and enjoy full freedom and democracy, and regardless of what you did or how you did it, the leader did not care or supervise, never questioned you, did not check your work, did not speak up when issues were found, and only either cajoled or negotiated with you, would they be a good leader? Clearly not. Such a leader is harming you. They indulge your evildoing, allowing you to go against principles and do as you wish—they are shoving you toward a pit of fire. This is not a responsible, up-to-standard leader. On the other hand, if a leader is able to regularly supervise you, identify issues in your work and promptly remind or reprove and expose you, and correct and help with your incorrect pursuits and deviations in doing your duty in a timely manner, and, under their supervision, reproof, provision, and help, your wrong attitude toward your duty changes, you are able to discard some absurd views, your own ideas and things arising from impetuosity gradually reduce, and you are able to calmly accept statements and views that are correct and in accordance with the truth principles, isn't this beneficial for you? The benefits are indeed

immense!” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). God’s words calmed my heart. I realized that God does not like to see me harboring so much resentment. Instead, He hopes I can quiet myself, first reflect on the deviations and problems in my work, and accept the leader’s supervision and guidance. I read that God said that responsible leaders and workers will follow up and understand each person’s work, identify problems and deviations, and provide timely guidance and correction. Sometimes, their attitude may be somewhat strict, and even accompanied by criticism and pruning. Actually, it’s that they are being responsible for the work, and it’s to ensure that it is done well. This is what an up-to-standard leader should do. When facing the leader’s supervision and guidance, a reasonable person should actively accept them. However, my initial response to them had been to resist them, and I had tried to justify myself in my heart to save face. In what way did I have any real attitude of acceptance? Reflecting on how I had just been elected as a team leader and had many shortcomings, I understood that the leader’s supervision, inquiries, and guidance meant that they were being responsible for the work. Just like when the leader had pointed out that I had only scratched the surface of the issues and did not understand the root causes of having no harmonious cooperation among team members, resulting in incomplete problem-solving. On careful reflection, I realized that it was indeed so. I had been managing the work superficially and not solving the problems at their root, which had naturally led to poor results. I should have reasonably accepted the leader’s guidance and not resisted or justified myself. Thinking about this, I no longer felt any more resistance to the leader. Later, I recalled that God said we should reflect on and know ourselves in every situation we encounter, and that only in this way can we make progress and change. So, I consciously sought out relevant words of

God to ponder and reflect on myself, while also praying silently to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me in knowing myself.

One morning during my devotionals, I read a passage of God's words: **"When some people are assigned a project by the Above, a while goes by without any progress at all. They don't tell the Above whether they're working on it, or how it's going, or whether there have been any intervening difficulties or problems. They give no feedback. Some of the work is urgent and can't be delayed, yet they drag their feet, drawing it out for a long time without finishing the work. The Above must then make inquiries. When the Above does this, those people find the inquiries unbearably embarrassing, and they resist them at heart: 'It's only been ten-odd days since I was assigned this job. I haven't even gotten my bearings yet, and already, the Above's making inquiries. Their requirements of people are just too high!' There they are, looking for faults with the inquiries. What is the problem here? Tell Me, isn't it quite normal for the Above to make inquiries? Part of it is a wish to know more about the state of the work's progress, as well as what difficulties remain to be resolved; in addition to that, it's a wish to know more about what sort of caliber the people they assigned this work to have, and whether they'll actually be able to resolve problems and do the job well. The Above wants to know the facts as they are, and most times, they make inquiries in such circumstances. Is that not something they should do? The Above is worried that you don't know how to resolve problems and can't handle the job. That's why they make inquiries. Some people are quite resistant to and repulsed by such inquiries. They're unwilling to let people make inquiries, and so long as people do, they're resistant and have misgivings, always ruminating, 'Why are they always making inquiries and looking to know more? Is it**

that they don't trust me and look down on me? If they don't trust me, then they shouldn't use me!' They never understand the Above's inquiries and supervision, but resist them. Do people like this have reason? Why don't they permit the Above to make inquiries and supervise them? Why are they resistant and defiant, besides? What's the problem here? They don't care whether their performance of their duty is effective or whether it will hamper the progress of the work. They don't seek the truth principles when doing their duty, but do whatever they want to. They give no thought to the results or efficiency of the work, and no thought at all to the interests of God's house, much less to what God intends and requires. Their thinking is, 'I have my own ways and routines for doing my duty. Don't require too much of me or require things in too much detail. It's well enough that I can do my duty. I can't get too fatigued or suffer too much.' They don't understand the Above's inquiries and attempts to know more about their work. What's missing from this lack of understanding of theirs? Isn't it missing submission? Isn't it missing a sense of responsibility? Loyalty? If they were truly responsible and loyal in doing their duty, would they reject the Above's inquiries into their work? (No.) They'd be able to understand it. If they truly can't understand it, there's only one possibility: They see their duty as their vocation and their livelihood, and they capitalize on it, regarding the duty they do as a condition and bargaining chip with which to obtain a reward all the while. They'll just do a bit of prestige work to get by with the Above, without any attempt to take God's commission as their duty and their obligation. So, when the Above makes inquiries about their work or supervises it, they go into a repulsed, resistant frame of mind. Is that not so? (It is.) Where does this problem stem from? What is its essence?

It's that their attitude toward the work project is mistaken. They think only of fleshly ease and comfort, of their own status and pride, instead of thinking about the effectiveness of the work and the interests of God's house. They don't seek to act according to the truth principles at all. If they truly had a bit of conscience and reason, they'd be able to understand the Above's inquiries and supervision. They'd be able to say, from the heart, 'It's a good thing the Above is making inquiries. Otherwise, I'd always be going off of my own will, which would impede the effectiveness of the work, or even botch it. The Above fellowships and checks things out, and it has actually solved actual problems—what a great thing that is!' This would show them to be a responsible person. They're afraid that if they took on the work by themselves, if there happened to be an error or mishap, and it caused a loss to the work of God's house that there would be no way to remedy, that would be a responsibility they couldn't bear. Is that not a sense of responsibility? (It is.) It's a sense of responsibility, and it's a sign that they're fulfilling their loyalty" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). From God's words, I saw that those who are truly responsible and loyal in their duty are happy to accept supervision and guidance from others to make up for their shortcomings and put their best effort into doing their duty well. However, those who are not loyal to their duty consider their own face and status in every situation. When others supervise or inquire about their work, they feel that others do not think highly of them or show consideration for them, and they become resistant and antagonistic, showing no attitude of accepting the truth whatsoever. Reflecting on how I had responded to the leader's supervision, wasn't it an indication of my lack of loyalty? When I'd reported my work situation to the leader, I thought that I had done some

actual work, and that the leader would think well of me. But unexpectedly, the leader had found many problems in the work I'd followed up on, and had pointed out that I'd only seen the superficial issues and had not grasped the root problems to fellowship and resolve. I'd felt that the leader was negating my work, and had become resistant and dissatisfied. Especially when I thought about how the leader had questioned closely my work in front of my coworkers and had pointed out my problems and I had felt humiliated, I got very angry. I had kept justifying and defending myself in my heart, trying to save face, and had even sulked resentfully. In fact, the leader's supervision and guidance were meant to help me do my duty well, which was beneficial to the church's work. But I had no attitude of acceptance whatsoever and even felt that the leader was intentionally belittling and looking down on me. I had only cared about my face and status, without considering the work of God's house at all. I had not been a person who was loyal in doing their duty. Furthermore, I had been particularly arrogant and self-righteous, always thinking that the work I was responsible for was fairly good, and not as bad as the leader said. So I had been very resistant and opposed to the leader's well-intentioned guidance and help, without any attitude of seeking or accepting. I really had been too self-righteous and intransigent, revealing a satanic disposition of being averse to the truth. How could I accept the truth and gain it if I couldn't even accept others' normal guidance while doing my duty? After realizing these things, I analyzed the issues pointed out by the leader, and when discussing work with my team members, I consciously pondered over the nature and root of the problems that surfaced. I then pointed out solutions to these real issues. They said this kind of fellowship was effective and could solve some problems. Seeing this result made me happy. Sometimes there were still areas in my work that I had not considered thoroughly, and the

leader would point them out to me. I consciously accepted, made amends, and had some entry, and gradually I began to feel that I was gaining something.

Later, I was put in charge of the work of several more teams. A few months later, the leader asked me one day about the work situation. There were some details that I couldn't explain clearly. The leader then said to me sternly, "You have been responsible for these teams for a while, but you don't even know these details. Isn't this being irresponsible and not doing actual work?" Hearing the leader's words, I felt my face burning with embarrassment. Although I knew the leader was speaking the truth, I still found it hard to accept, worrying that the leader took a dim view of me and what my coworkers would think of me. But then I thought of God's words that I had read some time before: **"If they truly had a bit of conscience and reason, they'd be able to understand the Above's inquiries and supervision. They'd be able to say, from the heart, 'It's a good thing the Above is making inquiries. Otherwise, I'd always be going off of my own will, which would impede the effectiveness of the work, or even botch it. The Above fellowships and checks things out, and it has actually solved actual problems—what a great thing that is!' This would show them to be a responsible person"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). As I pondered God's words, my heart gradually calmed down. The leader's inquiries into my work had been out of responsibility for the work; it was I who had not done actual work. What reason did I have to resist others' criticism and pruning? I had kept worrying about my own face, wasn't that still trying to defend myself? Wasn't that still putting my own face first, before the work of God's house? Thinking about it, since I was responsible for the work of these teams, I should have had the responsibility

to shoulder the work. But now once the leader was questioning the work in detail, it had become clear that I didn't grasp the specifics of these tasks and had not done any actual work. Yet, I still wanted to save face and didn't want others to expose or criticize me. Wasn't this still not accepting the truth? Realizing this, I felt some self-reproach and was willing to accept the leader's guidance to correct my problems. Afterward, I started to take the initiative to get involved in the team's work and to actually understand the specific circumstances of each aspect of it. I communicated the problems I identified with the team members, and they also expressed a willingness to resolve these issues promptly. Through actually participating in the work, I gained a lot. I carefully pondered the problems that existed in the work and later came up with some ideas. Practicing this way made me feel more at ease.

Through this experience, I realized that accepting supervision and guidance in doing one's duty is an attitude of being responsible for the church's work. There are still many deviations and flaws in my duty that require the leader's supervision and guidance. Relying solely on myself, I can't do many tasks well and might even delay the church's work. The leader's supervision and guidance of my work are not meant to make things difficult for me. On the contrary, they are beneficial for me to do my duty well and to reflect on and know my shortcomings and deficiencies. Now, I can correctly handle the supervision and guidance from brothers and sisters and am willing to accept them, reflect on myself, and rectify my deviations.

53. Choices in a Dangerous Environment

By Xin Ming, China

On the evening of April 15, 2022, at a little past 10 p.m., I received a letter from the leader saying that four brothers and sisters from my hometown church had been arrested. Seeing these familiar names, I felt especially heavy in my heart. One of the sisters had once performed her duties with me, and we had both been investigated by the police over the phone. Would her arrest implicate me as well? I felt a bit scared. Subsequently, I heard that another five brothers and sisters had been arrested, two of whom were church leaders. At noon on the 21st, I received another letter from the leader saying that they had lost contact with my hometown church and asked if I could go back to understand the situation, check if the stored books of God's words were in danger, and see if they could be relocated. After reading the letter, I was particularly anxious. If the books of God's words were seized by the police, the loss would be significant. But I had left the local church ten years ago and didn't know where the books were stored. Suddenly, I thought of my mother who had always been in the church and would probably know the situation. But then a selfish thought arose in my heart: "If I say that my mother can find the house where the books are kept, the leader will definitely arrange for me to go back. The Communist Party's crackdown is so severe now; if I go back at this time, wouldn't I be walking right into the line of fire? If I were arrested and imprisoned, could I withstand the torture? Just thinking about the scenes of brothers and sisters being tortured by the police after their arrests scares me. I'd better just stay here; going back is too dangerous!" Thinking of this, I didn't immediately reply to the leader agreeing to go back. But then I thought of how, over the years, I had enjoyed many of

God's graces and the supply of the truth without having done much for God. Especially now, my efforts in doing my duties hadn't yielded much fruit, and I often lived by my corrupt disposition. I had already owed God too much. Now, with many brothers and sisters from my hometown church being arrested and losing contact, I couldn't just stand by and watch, nor could I let the books of God's words be seized by the great red dragon. At this moment, a line from a hymn floated into my mind: "The time has come to display our loyalty to God; we shall suffer for testifying to Him." God hoped that in times of danger and hardship, I could prioritize the interests of God's family. But I was afraid of being arrested if I went back, and all I thought about was my own interests. I had no loyalty to God at all, I was too selfish! When the church faced persecution and hardship, I was just trying to save my own skin. I was really devoid of conscience! When the church work needed me, if I didn't stand up now, I would definitely feel guilty and regret it deeply later. I couldn't be a coward anymore; I had to do my best to protect the books of God's words. After realizing this, I quickly wrote back to the leader, telling her that I could go back and find my mom to understand the situation.

Later, the leader came to see me and fellowshiped with me in detail how to cooperate once I returned to my hometown. She repeatedly urged me not to contact the brothers and sisters of the church or my mom directly after I went back, as it was uncertain whether they were under police surveillance. She also told me to first find out if my mom was safe before meeting her to discuss the books of God's words. At that time, I was both nervous and scared. I was afraid of being arrested by the police, and I was nervous because I had never dealt with such a situation before and didn't know if I could handle it well. After the leader left, I hurried to read God's words. God says: **"You should not be afraid of this and that; no matter**

how many difficulties and dangers you might face, you are capable of remaining steady before Me, unobstructed by any hindrance, so that My will may be carried out unimpeded. This is your duty.... You must endure all; for Me, you must be ready to relinquish everything you possess and do everything you can to follow Me, and be ready to expend your all. Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me? Can you loyally follow Me to the end of the road? Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road? Remember this! Do not forget! All that occurs is by My goodwill, and everything is under My observation. Can you follow My word in all that you say and do? When the trials of fire come upon you, will you kneel down and call out? Or will you cower, incapable of moving forward?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). When I read these words of God, which say: **"Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me?" "When the trials of fire come upon you, will you kneel down and call out? Or will you cower, incapable of moving forward?"** it felt like God was clearly telling me that the current circumstances were laid out by Him, that it was a test for me. I felt that God was scrutinizing my heart to see if I would prioritize my own interests and be fearful and shrink back during persecution and hardship, or if I would prioritize the interests of God's house and safely relocate the books of God's words. I also felt that God was hoping I could perform well. I didn't want to disappoint God's intention, nor did I want to be a coward who just tries to survive, so I quickly knelt down and prayed to God, "God, my stature is too small; I have never experienced such circumstances before, and I am very nervous, afraid that I will not do this duty well. God, please guide me and help me to calm my heart." After praying, I felt much calmer.

By the time I arrived in my hometown, it was already past 8 p.m. Walking on the street, I felt uneasy, not knowing how the brothers and sisters were doing, whether the books of God's words were safe, and whether any danger would come upon me. In my heart, I continuously asked God to help me keep my heart calm. When I reached my younger brother's door, I hesitated, knowing that my brother was opposed to my faith in God. When my father passed away from illness, I didn't go back, and my brother personally told me, "From now on, you're not my sister anymore." I didn't know whether he would help me. My heart grew tense again, and I stood in the corridor for several minutes, not daring to go in. I silently prayed in my heart, and I gradually felt calmer and gained the courage to knock on the door. To my surprise, my brother didn't show any hostility. I also learned from him that my mother was safe for the time being. On the day the brothers and sisters were arrested, she happened to be moving to a new place, and now no one in the church knew where she lived. I quickly went to see my mother. I thought, "My mother had lived in her previous house for seven years, and every brother and sister in the church knew her place. It would have been so easy for the police to find her, so it's fortunate that she moved—otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to contact her. Isn't it God's orchestration and arrangement that my mom moved in advance?" At this moment, I felt that my stature was too small, and that I had no faith in God whatsoever. Initially, I hadn't dared to come back, fearing that I would be arrested and that I wouldn't find the house where the books were safekept. Now I saw that God had arranged everything. Seeing God's almightiness and sovereignty, I gained faith. My mother said that she knew four houses where the books of God's words were kept two years ago, but she didn't know whether there had been any changes now. A sister named Li Han was in charge of this matter, and it was

more accurate to get the information from her. Besides, with an introduction from Li Han, the safekeepers of the books would trust us. I thought, “Li Han’s house is a shop, and almost all the arrested people know it. If she is under police surveillance, won’t my mother and I be arrested too?” Those police officers are devils who harm people. Some of the arrested brothers and sisters were scalded with boiling water, some were stripped naked and shocked all over their bodies with electric batons, and others were handcuffed and hung upside down. Just thinking about these cruel scenes made me tremble. I thought, “If I get arrested, won’t I also have to endure this kind of torture? If they shot me dead and made it quick, that would be fine, and I would die without much suffering. Maybe I would become a martyr, and my soul would be saved. But these devils are insidious and vicious. They force the arrested brothers and sisters to deny God and sell out the church leaders and the church’s funds. If the brothers and sisters refuse to speak, they are subjected to various torture, and if they still don’t speak, they are imprisoned and tormented by the inmates. The police use all kinds of vicious methods, truly making it like hell on earth, where people can neither live nor die and suffer excruciating torment! I haven’t suffered much during my life, and even a headache or fever makes me quite uncomfortable. How can I bear such inhumane torture? My mother is also old, and if she is arrested, she will suffer terribly even if she doesn’t die.” Thinking of this, I told my mother, “If Li Han is being watched by the police, we might also be arrested. I don’t think we should contact Li Han.” After hearing this, my mother didn’t push the matter any further.

It was already late at night after we finished discussing this, and lying in bed, I couldn’t sleep, thinking, “My mother doesn’t know exactly where the books are kept, and if we go there hastily, will the safekeeping families hand over the books to us easily? It would be more reliable to get in touch

with Li Han.” I realized that my reluctance to contact Li Han was because I feared being implicated and was still protecting my own interests, so I quickly sought God’s words to resolve my state. I read this passage from God’s words: **“Antichrists are extremely selfish and despicable. They do not have true faith in God, much less loyalty to God; when they encounter an issue, they only protect and safeguard themselves. For them, nothing is more important than their own safety. As long as they can live and won’t get arrested, they don’t care how much harm is done to the work of the church. These people are extremely selfish, they don’t think of the brothers and sisters at all, or of the work of the church, they only think of their own safety. They are antichrists. So when such things befall those who are loyal to God and have true faith in God, how do they handle them? How does what they do differ from what antichrists do? (When such things befall those who are loyal to God, they will think of any way to safeguard the interests of the house of God, to protect against losses to the offerings of God, and they will make the necessary arrangements for the leaders and workers, and the brothers and sisters, to minimize losses. Antichrists, meanwhile, make sure they are protected first. They are not concerned about the work of the church or the safety of God’s chosen people, and when the church is faced with arrests, it results in a loss to church work.) Antichrists abandon the work of the church and God’s offerings, and they do not arrange for people to handle the aftermath. This is the same as permitting the great red dragon to seize God’s offerings and His chosen people. Is this not a covert betrayal of God’s offerings and His chosen people? When those who are loyal to God know clearly that an environment is dangerous, they still brave the risk of doing the work of handling the aftermath, and they keep the losses to God’s house to a minimum before they**

themselves withdraw. They do not give priority to their own safety. Tell Me, in this wicked country of the great red dragon, who could ensure that there is no danger at all in believing in God and doing a duty? Whatever duty one takes on, it entails some risk—yet the performance of duty is commissioned by God, and while following God, one must take on the risk of doing their duty. One should exercise wisdom, and one has need of taking measures to ensure their safety, but one should not put their personal safety first. They should consider God’s intentions, putting the work of His house first and putting the spread of the gospel first. Completing God’s commission of them is what matters most, and it comes first. Antichrists give top priority to their personal safety; they believe that nothing else has anything to do with them. They do not care when something happens to someone else, regardless of who it might be. As long as nothing bad happens to the antichrists themselves, they feel at ease. They are devoid of any loyalty, which is determined by the antichrists’ nature essence” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). After reading God’s words, I felt deeply distressed and upset, thinking that God’s words were judging me. The disposition I revealed was just like that of antichrists. The antichrists, when facing danger and hardship, only consider their own safety and how to protect themselves, showing no loyalty to God and disregarding the interests of God’s family and the safety of the brothers and sisters. They are extremely selfish and despicable. Now, with the church facing arrests, protecting the books of God’s words was the most important task at this time of danger, and it was something anyone with a conscience and humanity ought to do. At this critical juncture, I was only thinking of preserving myself, not considering how to safely and securely relocate the books. Where was my loyalty to God? If I acted rashly, if I didn’t find the

safekeeping homes, or if they didn't hand over the books to us, it would delay the relocation of the books. If these books were seized by the police due to not being relocated in time, I would be held responsible! God's words are the sustenance of human life. To understand the truth, know oneself, cast off corrupt dispositions, and achieve salvation, one cannot do without God's words. God's words are even more important than human life. Brothers and sisters risk their lives to deliver God's words to the church so that more people can read them, understand the truth, and attain God's salvation. Those who sincerely believe in God would certainly risk their lives to protect the books of God's words, but at this crucial moment, I was only thinking of protecting myself. The more I thought about it, the more I felt I had no humanity at all. I also thought of Peter, who endured a lot of suffering and was even imprisoned while working and shepherding the church for the Lord. During the final persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor, Peter had already escaped the city. When the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to Peter, he understood that this meant the Lord Jesus wanted him to be crucified, so he submitted and returned to Rome, where he was ultimately crucified upside down, giving a testimony of supreme love to God. Although I cannot compare to Peter, the church had entrusted this task to me, and it was my responsibility and duty. I ought to be loyal to God, prioritize the interests of God's house, cooperate in any way that I could, and put forth my best effort. Realizing this, I prayed to God in repentance.

Early the next morning, I contacted a sister to get in touch with Li Han, and arranged to meet her. When Li Han saw us, she said anxiously, "One of the people who were arrested has become a Judas. Now one sister from a safekeeping family has been arrested, and the other families are also in danger. We hope you can quickly come and move the books." Hearing Li

Han's words, I realized the gravity of the situation and felt even more anxious. I quickly went with Li Han to identify the other safekeeping homes. We were very cautious on the way, constantly observing our surroundings, and I kept praying in my heart. After identifying the families, I arranged for a car to come relocate the books. To my surprise, once we got on the highway, we found that the police checks were very strict. Each car was inspected for several minutes before it could pass, and there were several traffic police officers maintaining order nearby. Seeing this situation, I became nervous again. If we were caught, we wouldn't be able to relocate the books. I prayed to God continuously in my heart. I thought of God's words which say: **"Any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). Indeed, both the living and the non-living are under God's sovereignty and arrangement, and the thoughts and ideas of those who do not believe in God are also under His control. Whether we could pass through smoothly today was in God's hands, and I needed to have faith. At that moment, our car was stopped for inspection. To my surprise, the inspector knew the brother driving the car and let us pass without checking. I saw God's protection.

Afterward, I reflected on myself, thinking, "Why am I so afraid of being arrested? If I don't resolve this issue, there's no telling when I might fall." I saw a passage of God's words: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose a lifetime of dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment."**

You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). After reading God’s words, I realized that suffering for the truth is the most valuable thing. Only through adversity can one gain the truth. Take the brothers and sisters who endured torture, for instance. They experienced the torture and inhumane abuse, but they developed a true understanding and hatred of the Communist Party’s ugly face and evil essence, and their hearts became more steadfast in following God. Some brothers and sisters, when on the verge of death, called out to God and witnessed His wonderful protection, gaining a real understanding of God’s almightiness and sovereignty and developing genuine faith. Although they suffered greatly, they gave testimonies that triumphed over Satan. All of these things could not be gained in a comfortable environment; their suffering was profoundly meaningful! I hadn’t understood the truth or known the value and significance of suffering, always afraid of fleshly suffering and avoiding the environments that God had laid out for me. Wasn’t this blindness and ignorance on my part? I also thought of this passage from God’s words: **“As members of the human race and devout Christians, it is the responsibility and obligation of us all to offer up our minds and bodies for the fulfillment of God’s commission, for our entire being came from God, and it exists thanks to the sovereignty of God. If our minds and bodies are not for God’s commission and not for the just cause of**

mankind, then our souls will feel unworthy of those who were martyred for God's commission, and much more unworthy of God, who has provided us with everything" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). My life is given by God. It was God who brought me before Him and gave me the opportunity to pursue the truth and receive salvation. As a person with a conscience and reason, I should live for God. Relocating the books of God's words today was my responsibility. Even if I was really arrested and suffered physically, I had to fulfill my duty. I thought of the saints throughout history who were persecuted and martyred for their testimony of God: Peter was crucified upside down for God, Stephen was stoned to death, some were killed by the sword, sawn in half, or boiled in oil, and others were dismembered by five horses. They all dedicated themselves to the just cause of humanity, which is remembered by God and is a glorious deed. If I was arrested and imprisoned for relocating God's books today, it would also be suffering for righteousness. Realizing this, I resolved to rebel against my flesh and was willing to do my utmost in this duty.

Later, I learned that one of those arrested had become a Judas and was leading the police in arresting brothers and sisters. The number of people arrested had increased to nineteen, and the police had a list and were using photos to have the Judas identify people. These brothers and sisters needed to hide quickly. Hearing such news, I thought, "The situation has become so severe, even worse than I imagined. If I go to relocate the books now, it's very likely I'll be arrested. Can I endure the police's torture?" I knew I was once again timid and afraid, so I quickly knelt down to pray, "God, hearing about the church's situation has made me afraid again. I fear being arrested and suffering physically. God, please guide and lead me to not live according to my selfish and despicable corrupt disposition and to complete

this duty.” At that moment, I recalled these words of God: **“On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified. Ultimately, He was nailed to the cross and became the likeness of sinful flesh, completing the work of the redemption of mankind. He broke free of the shackles of death and Hades. Before Him, mortality, hell, and Hades lost their power, and were vanquished by Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Serve in Harmony With God’s Intentions). When the Lord Jesus carried the cross to Golgotha, He was beaten severely, His body was bruised, and His face was covered in blood, suffering greatly. Yet, He showed no sign of regretting. To redeem all of humanity, He willingly endured these sufferings and was crucified. In the end, He overcame Satan and completed the work of redeeming the entire mankind. The Lord Jesus, fully aware of the immense suffering required by the crucifixion, did not retreat. Even if it meant enduring suffering Himself, He would save mankind from sin. Thinking about this, I felt deeply inspired. Then, reflecting on myself, I realized that I kept retreating in the face of danger and tribulation, and my behavior was so base and despicable! The situation I faced today was also a test, determining whether I would choose to be loyal to God or to myself at this crucial moment. I could no longer be selfish and only consider my own flesh; I needed to follow the example of the Lord Jesus, even if it meant being arrested, imprisoned, or tortured to death, I had to relocate the books of God’s words. Satisfying God, even once, would be worthwhile. When I thought this, I felt a surge of strength throughout my body, and I was energized to cooperate. I knew this was all given by God, and I was deeply grateful.

Afterward, we safely relocated books from three houses. By the time we were relocating books from the fourth house, it was already past midnight. There were two dogs at a neighbor's house that barked incessantly at any sound. I was so nervous that my heart felt like it was in my throat, fearing that the neighbors might discover us and call the police. I kept calling out to God in my heart. To my relief, after we finished loading the car, the neighbors didn't come out. Seeing God's protection, I thanked Him fervently. Thus, we successfully and safely relocated books from four safekeeping homes without any incidents. On the way back, we shared our experiences, and the joy we felt was beyond words.

Through this experience, I gained some understanding of God's almightiness and sovereignty. From my mother moving house on the day the brothers and sisters were arrested, to my brother helping me understand the situation and our smooth passage through the checkpoints—these were all under God's sovereignty and arrangement. The safe relocation of the books this time was entirely due to God's guidance. Without the enlightenment of God's words and the strength God provided, I would have been unable to rebel against my flesh and lacked the faith to cooperate. This was all the result of God's words.

54. Does Money Really Bring Happiness?

By Michael, New Zealand

When I was eight years old, my family experienced an unforeseen incident. From then on, my mother and I were dependent on each other to get by, and she took me back to our home in the countryside. At that time, we were utterly destitute. Other people lived in multi-story homes, while we were just in a tile-roofed hut; we were very hard up. I envied others and hoped that I could earn a lot of money when I grew up so that my mother and I could have financial security. In order to make money, I didn't continue my education after graduating from high school. Back then, the brothers and sisters wanted me to join the church and live the church life. However, I was worried that gatherings would get in the way of me earning money. I was still quite young, and I'd have to get married and make a living in the future. I'd need money for everything I did. So, I rejected the kind words and advice of the brothers and sisters and resolutely stepped onto the path of pursuing money, fame, and gain.

I did construction work and also worked as a porter. Later, I studied marketing and did business with some relatives. Eventually, business was on the up and up, and the small shop we started with expanded into a small company with a dozen or so employees in just a few years. At that young age, I became a boss and made some money. My family's financial situation improved, I bought a home, and I was able to cover all basic life expenses. Although I made more and more money and my fleshly life was satisfied, I became increasingly unhappy. For the sake of making money, I had to put on an air of cheerfulness with clients, flattering and fawning on them, and lying and cheating people became my daily routine. I would stop at nothing to serve my own interests and didn't live like a human at all. In the past, I

had seen that God's words tell us to be honest people. Each time I thought of this, I had an extremely guilty conscience. On top of that, every day I was putting all my time and energy into the business, always keeping a good temper and attitude with clients. When they called me to arrange something, I would handle it right away, as if I was responding to an imperial decree. However, when my mother wanted me to help her with housework or chat with her, I always told her I was busy and asked her not to bother me. I didn't attend gatherings, and I barely prayed at all. My condition was entirely that of a faithless nonbeliever. I gradually became depraved in spite of myself. Because connections were very important in business, every day I was thinking about how to maintain relationships with clients. No matter who I was dealing with, as long as they could bring me interests, I would compliment them and speak insincere words to please them. I became increasingly hypocritical and deceitful, and it had truly reached the point where I was acting two-faced. I was disgusted by this behavior of mine. I hated myself more and more, and also hated this means of survival.

Several years later, when COVID was spreading around the country, I got infected, and my whole body was in great pain. Several hours before my symptoms started, I was brimming with energy, busying myself with various business matters, when suddenly I lacked the strength to even stand up. I lay in bed, all my muscles aching painfully, and my head felt like it was going to explode. Since I had a high fever that wouldn't go down, my lips got chapped. I was vomiting and having diarrhea; I felt awful, as if death wasn't too far away. That was when I felt how fragile and small man is. At that time, I began to reflect, thinking, "What on earth am I living like this for?" Past events appeared scene-by-scene in my mind like clips from a movie, and I thought, "Every day, I've been racking my brains for ways to

make more money. Am I really living just to desperately make money and work like this? Is it all just to satisfy my vanity and self-respect, to make people think highly of me? Just to indulge in food, drink, and enjoyments? Is this my purpose in life? Is this all that my life consists of? Am I really going to die like this?" Thinking of this, I was filled with deep remorse. I regretted that I hadn't properly believed in God and lived the church life from the outset. I was very regretful, and I wasn't willing to die like this. I thought of God's words which I'd read in the past: **"All manner of disasters will befall, one after another; all nations and places will experience calamities: Plague, famine, flood, drought, and earthquakes are everywhere. These disasters are not just happening in one or two places, nor will they be over within a day or two; rather, instead they will expand across a greater and greater area, and become more and more severe. During this time, all manner of insect plagues will arise one after another, and the phenomenon of cannibalism will occur everywhere. This is My judgment upon all nations and peoples"** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 65).

"People spend their lives chasing after money and fame; they clutch at these straws, thinking they are their only means of support, as if by having them they could live on, exempt from death. But only when they are about to die do they realize how distant these things are from them, how weak they are in the face of death, how easily they shatter, how lonely and helpless they are, with nowhere to turn. They realize that life cannot be bought with money or fame, that no matter how wealthy a person may be, no matter how lofty their position, all are equally poor and insignificant in the face of death. They realize that money cannot buy life, that fame cannot erase death, that neither money nor fame can lengthen a person's life by a single minute, a single second. The more

people feel this way, the more they yearn to keep on living; the more people feel this way, the more they dread the approach of death. Only at this point do they truly realize that their lives do not belong to them, are not theirs to control, and that one has no say over whether one lives or dies—that all of this lies outside of one’s control” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Actually, I’d read these words a number of times before. Although I was afraid of calamities, as long as they didn’t happen to me, I always felt that they were quite distant and went on pursuing wealth and pursuing the life I wanted as I’d done before. Now, I was lying in bed with my whole body in pain, at my wit’s end, and only then did I understand that although wealth could bring people some material enjoyments, it was truly useless when facing COVID. I finally realized that I was truly ignorant and blind. I was so intransigent! Looking at it closely, even though I believed in God, I’d completely ignored His words and never halted my pursuit of wealth, fame, and gain; this had been my true attitude toward God and His words. Only when I was infected with COVID did I begin to self-reflect. I thought of what the Lord Jesus said: **“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:26). I finally had a bit of firsthand understanding on what these words meant. One truly can’t use money to buy life! I managed to turn over in bed and knelt down to pray, “Almighty God, I am so ignorant and blind. I have only myself to blame for reaching this point in my life. You’ve been saving me all this time, using the brothers and sisters to repeatedly invite me to participate in the church life, but I never wanted to accept it and rejected Your salvation. God, I am so regretful. Now, I understand that money cannot buy health or buy life. I’ve always pursued money, wanting to use it to improve my life, but in order to earn money, I lived in physical and emotional exhaustion,

and it nearly did me in. I don't want to go on living in such a painful way. I don't want to keep living like a hypocrite in this environment of mutual deception that is filled with cheating and lies. God, please forgive me and let me have one more chance. Please save me!" That was how I prayed and repented. Although my physical pain did not lessen one bit, at that moment, my heart felt as warm as a child huddled up in their parent's embrace.

The next day, my mother heard I'd been infected and came to take care of me. She read me many of Almighty God's words, and some of them left a deep impression on me. Almighty God says: **"Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). **"'Money makes the world go round' is a philosophy of Satan. It prevails among the whole of mankind, in every human society; you could say it is a trend. This is because it has been instilled in the heart of every single person, who at first did not accept this saying, but then gave it tacit acceptance when they came into contact with real life, and began to feel that these words were in fact true. Is this not a process of Satan corrupting man? Perhaps people do not understand this saying to the same degree, but everyone**

has different degrees of interpretation and acknowledgment of this saying based on things that have happened around them and on their own personal experiences. Is that not the case? Regardless of how much experience someone has with this saying, what is the negative effect that it can have on someone's heart? Something is revealed through the human disposition of the people in this world, including each and every one of you. What is it? It is the worship of money. Is it hard to remove this from someone's heart? It is very hard! It seems that Satan's corruption of man is deep indeed! Satan uses money to tempt people, and corrupts them into worshipping money and venerating material things. And how is this worship of money manifested in people? Do you feel that you could not survive in this world without any money, that even one day without money would be impossible? People's status is based on how much money they have, as is the respect they command. The backs of the poor are bent in shame, while the rich enjoy their high status. They stand tall and proud, speaking loudly and living arrogantly. What does this saying and trend bring to people? Is it not true that many people make any sacrifice in the pursuit of money? Do many people not lose their dignity and integrity in the pursuit of more money? Do many people not lose the opportunity to perform their duty and follow God for the sake of money? Is losing the chance to gain the truth and be saved not the greatest of all losses for people? Is Satan not sinister to use this method and this saying to corrupt man to such a degree? Is this not a malicious trick?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique V). Reading Almighty God's words, I felt that each sentence was the truth. The words He spoke were so correct, and they cut right to the depths of my heart. I was the same as what God had exposed: always worshipping money, acting

according to the idea of “money is first.” I believed that if I had money, I’d have everything and be able to live an upper-class life, to live as I pleased and be thought highly of by others, whereas if I didn’t have money, I wouldn’t be able to do a thing. Through what God’s words exposed, I saw Satan’s maliciousness and despicable motives. Satan used money, fame, and gain to control my mind, causing me to get lost deep inside these things and turn chasing money into the goal and direction I pursued in life, thereby making me shun and betray God and become more and more deceitful, wicked, and greedy, setting me up to be destroyed along with Satan in the end. In the past, I had always lived by the ideas that Satan instilled in me, my mind set on nothing but money, fame, and gain. I believed that people couldn’t do a thing without money, and that those who had money could enjoy a better life and get others to think highly of them. This seemingly simple belief bound me with invisible chains, keeping me firmly under Satan’s control, without a trace of courage to struggle free. This was how I’d been duped and corrupted by Satan. For the sake of money, fame, and gain, I became detached and heartless, doing things by hook or by crook, full of lies and cheating. I wasn’t living like a human being whatsoever. After earning some money, I went traveling all over, wanting to ease my pain. In reality, this was only a temporary way to numb myself. Even though I’d put all my energy and time into work, wanting this to enrich my life, I could never shake off the emptiness that I felt inside. It was God’s words that awakened my heart. I began to closely examine my pursuits, and I didn’t want to keep persistently pursuing money, fame, and gain. These things were not as all-powerful as I had imagined. When I was sick in bed, unable to get up, material enjoyments and money all seemed so insignificant. Money cannot save man’s life, and it is not the root of man’s existence. It does not free people from pain.

Then, I began seeking as to how I should pursue in order to live a life of value and meaning. At that time, I read these words of God: **“As someone who is normal, and who pursues the love for God, entry into the kingdom to become one of the people of God is your true future, and a life that is of the utmost value and significance; no one is more blessed than you. Why do I say this? Because those who do not believe in God live for the flesh, and they live for Satan, but today you live for God, and live to follow the will of God. That is why I say your lives are of the utmost significance. Only this group of people, who have been selected by God, are able to live out a life of the utmost significance: No one else on earth is able to live out a life of such value and meaning”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Know God’s Newest Work and Follow His Footsteps).

“Regardless of what duty one performs, it is the most proper thing they could do, the most beautiful and just thing among humankind. As created beings, people ought to perform their duty, and only then can they receive the approval of the Creator. Created beings live under the Creator’s dominion, and they accept all that is provided by God and everything that comes from God, so they should fulfill their responsibilities and obligations. This is perfectly natural and justified, and was ordained by God. From this it can be seen that, for people to perform the duty of a created being is more just, beautiful, and noble than anything else done while living on earth; nothing among humankind is more meaningful or worthy, and nothing brings greater meaning and worth to the life of a created person, than performing the duty of a created being. On earth, only the group of people who truly and sincerely perform the duty of a created being are those who submit to the Creator. This group does not follow worldly trends; they submit to the leadership and guidance of God, only listen to the words of the

Creator, accept the truths expressed by the Creator, and live by the words of the Creator. This is the truest, most resounding testimony, and it is the best testimony of belief in God. For a created being to be able to fulfill the duty of a created being, to be able to satisfy the Creator, is the most beautiful thing among humankind, and is something that should be spread as a tale to be praised by all people. Anything the Creator entrusts to created beings should be unconditionally accepted by them; for humankind, this is a matter of both happiness and privilege, and for all those who fulfill the duty of a created being, nothing is more beautiful or worthy of commemoration—it is something positive” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)).

Through reading God’s words, I found a direction in life. I understood that as a created being, one should live to pursue the truth, to satisfy God’s intentions, and to gain the approval of the Creator. As a created being, one ought to take up their duty and fulfill their responsibility; there is nothing more valuable or meaningful than this. In following Satan and pursuing money, fame, and gain, not only can one not gain true happiness, they will also become increasingly selfish and greedy. Ultimately, they’ll be totally captured by Satan and fall into infinite pain. Now, God’s work of the last days was almost over; if I still couldn’t seize this chance to believe in God properly, I would be truly too foolish. I didn’t want to go on being harmed by the ideas Satan had instilled in me, and I made up my mind to break away from this life of pain. By my third day of being laid up in bed, I still had a fever, but I wasn’t in as much pain. I said to my mother, “I want to attend gatherings.” Before long, I started living the church life, and I thanked God in my heart. God had given me another chance to return to His house, and I had to cherish it properly; I couldn’t fail to live up to His intentions. However, I still had a dilemma in front of me. I had some long-

standing clients in my business, and even though I was no longer trying so desperately to expand the business, I still invested my energy into it. I was ill at ease during gatherings, unable to calm my heart down before God. When the gatherings finished, I would take out my phone and see nothing but missed calls and messages from clients. At each gathering, I would experience all sorts of disturbances. I remember that one time, I was on the way to a gathering when I had to take a sudden call from a client who needed some goods urgently. I had almost arrived at the place where we were gathering, but, giving in to the client's pressure, I went to the gathering place and informed the brothers and sisters that something had come up, and then left in a hurry. I felt that this was interfering too much with the gatherings, and I wanted to let go of the business, but I was very conflicted. In the past, I was meeting with clients all day long, wanting to maintain my relationships with them by any means necessary. If I stopped now and wasted all my previous efforts, it would really be a shame. I wanted to attend gatherings, but couldn't let go of money, so I prayed to God and asked Him to show me a way out.

One day, I read a passage of God's words: **"If I were to place some money in front of you right now and give you the freedom to choose—and if I did not condemn you for your choice—then most of you would choose the money and forsake the truth. The better among you would give up the money and choose the truth reluctantly, while those in-between would seize the money in one hand and the truth in the other. Would your true colors thus not become self-evident? When choosing between the truth and anything to which you are loyal, you would all make this choice, and your attitude would remain the same. Is that not so? Are there not many among you who have seesawed between right and wrong? In contests between positive and negative, black and white,**

you are surely aware of the choices that you have made between family and God, children and God, peace and disruption, riches and poverty, status and ordinariness, being supported and being cast aside, and so on. Between a peaceful family and a broken one, you chose the former, and you did so without any hesitation; between riches and duty, you again chose the former, even lacking the will to return to shore; between luxury and poverty, you chose the former; when choosing between your sons, daughters, wives and husbands, and Me, you chose the former; and between notion and truth, you once again chose the former. Faced with all manner of your evil deeds, I have simply lost faith in you. It simply astounds Me that your hearts are so resistant to being softened. Many years of dedication and effort have apparently brought Me nothing more than your abandonment and despair, but My hopes for you grow with each passing day, for My day has been completely laid bare before everyone. Yet you persist in seeking dark and evil things, and refuse to loosen your grip on them. What, then, will be your outcome? Have you ever given careful consideration to this? If you were asked to choose again, what then would be your position? Would it still be the former? Would you still bring Me disappointment and wretched sorrow? Would your hearts still possess the sole modicum of warmth? Would you still be unaware of what to do to comfort My heart? At this moment, what do you choose? Will you submit to My words or be averse to them?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Whom Are You Loyal?). After reading God's words, I recognized that just as God said, I was someone who seized money in one hand and the truth in the other. Although I had seen clearly that money couldn't save man's life, that it wasn't the root of man's existence, and that it couldn't free people from pain, I still couldn't withstand its temptation. When I'd

had business waiting to be done that conflicted with the gathering time, I had put money first and been unable to make the correct choice. Hadn't I been so stubborn and senseless? I was just as God's words had exposed: **"Yet you persist in seeking dark and evil things, and refuse to loosen your grip on them."** My heart was so intransigent and willful, I didn't comprehend God's thoughtfulness in the slightest, and I hadn't fully understood how God persists in waiting for man. I wanted to believe in God properly; I couldn't fail to live up to His intentions any longer. However, I knew that my stature was small and that I couldn't get past this on my own. I urgently prayed to God, "God! I want to break free from this life. I'm busy with working and earning money all day, and I'm unable to calmly read Your words and gather. Living like this has seriously affected my church life. God, please show me a way out. I truly want to change; please give me the faith and strength to break free from this life of pain."

Later, during a gathering, I read two passages of God's words that touched my heart deeply. God says: **"Eyes that are full of deceit and prejudice toward others are not things that young people should have, and young people should not carry out destructive, abominable acts. They should not be without aspirations, drive, and an enthusiastic desire to better themselves; they should not be disheartened about their prospects, and nor should they lose hope in life or confidence in the future; they should have the perseverance to continue along the way of truth that they have now chosen—to realize their wish to expend their entire lives for Me. They should not be without the truth, nor should they harbor hypocrisy and unrighteousness—they should stand firm in the proper stance. They should not just drift along, but should have the spirit to dare to make sacrifices and to struggle for justice and truth. Young people should have the bravery to not succumb to oppression by**

the forces of darkness and to transform the significance of their existence. Young people should not resign themselves to adversity, but should be open and frank, with a spirit of forgiveness for their brothers and sisters. ... young people should not be without the resolve to exercise discernment in issues and to seek justice and the truth. You should pursue all things beautiful and good, and you should obtain the reality of all positive things. You should be responsible toward your life, and you must not take it lightly” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Words for the Young and the Old). **“Awaken, brothers! Awaken, sisters! My day will not be delayed; time is life, and to seize back time is to save life! The time is not far off! If you fail the college entrance examination, you can study and retake it as many times as you like. However, My day will brook no further delay. Remember! Remember! I urge you with these good words. The end of the world unfolds before your very eyes, and great disasters rapidly draw near. Which is more important: your life, or your sleep, your food and drink and clothing? The time has come for you to weigh these things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 30). Reading these words of God, my heart was so touched, and I thought, “I’ve already missed out on several chances, and I won’t get that time back. Nowadays, the situation in all countries is turbulent, with earthquakes, wars, the pandemic, and other natural and man-made disasters going on nonstop. There won’t be much time left for us to pursue the truth. If I keep missing out, I might miss out forever; I might never have another chance. Am I really going to wait until I’m faced with death to believe in God? Will that not be too late? What’s more important, making money or my life? It’s time for me to weigh all this.” I got a sense of God’s intentions and demands for young people from His words that said: **“Young people should have the bravery to not**

succumb to oppression by the forces of darkness and to transform the significance of their existence” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Words for the Young and the Old). God’s words gave me faith and strength. No longer could I go on being stubborn and senseless like this. I shouldn’t live for money, fame, and gain; what I ought to do was walk the path of believing in God and pursuing the truth. I needed to bring my past life to an end, and so I made up my mind to let go of this business.

After that, I mentioned this idea to my relatives. They did all they could to persuade me not to, saying they would raise both my end-of-year pay and base pay. That way, I would earn more than 10,000 yuan per month, and added together with the end-of-year pay, I’d make almost 200,000 yuan in a year. This was already quite a lot for someone in a small town. I was very tempted, and although it was an attractive offer, I had already made up my mind. I didn’t want to live this life of seizing money in one hand and the truth in the other any longer. Later on, I read more of God’s words: **“If you are of high station, of honorable reputation, possessed of abundant knowledge, the owner of plentiful assets, and supported by many people, yet these things do not prevent you from coming before God to accept His calling and His commission and to do what God asks of you, then all that you do shall be the most meaningful cause on earth and the most just undertaking of mankind. If you reject the call of God for the sake of status and your own goals, all that you do shall be cursed and even despised by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). In the past, I was living for my flesh and for Satan, only setting my sights on money, fame, and gain. As a result, I became increasingly wicked and corrupt, growing further and further from God and spending each day as a walking corpse. Now, I wanted to change my way of life and wholeheartedly follow God.

Later on, my relatives urged me to stay yet again, and knowing that this was Satan using them to stop me from going before God, I prayed to God and asked Him to show me a way out, “God, I don’t want to keep pursuing money, fame, and gain and walking the wrong path. I want to live a life of meaning and value. Please guide me and give me the faith to overcome this temptation from Satan!” I understood that this was Satan’s way of seducing and winning me over, so with a laugh, I said to my relatives, “I know that your intentions are good, but I want to venture out into the world while I’m still young and not always rely on relatives and friends. I’ve decided already; I’m going to strike out on my own.” My relatives saw that I’d made up my mind, and they respected my choice. I understood that this was God showing me a way out, and I took this chance to let go of my work. After that, I was able to believe in God and attend gatherings with peace of mind, and I began doing my duty. When interacting with brothers and sisters, I no longer had to put on a mask and act hypocritically like when I was doing business. In the church, I could remove all burdens and pretenses. If I had any issues, I could pray to God, and I could open my heart to the brothers and sisters and communicate with them, and they would help me sincerely and wholeheartedly. I could feel how genuine and kind the brothers and sisters were, and I felt warmth. These were things I’d never felt before. I was very happy living like that, and such peacefulness and joy were things that no amount of money could buy!

Now, I’ve found a simple, ordinary job, and just having clothes and food is enough for me. I put my time and energy into what is most meaningful and valuable: pursuing the truth and doing my duty well. Thank God for allowing me to get COVID and awakening my numbed heart, and for helping me to see my life’s path and direction clearly and to make the most correct choice.

55. I No Longer Relentlessly Pursue Status

By Li Jing, China

I was someone with a strong desire for honor and status. From childhood, I pursued standing out and being superior. As the saying goes, “Officials are superior to the common folk,” even the smallest official is considered better than the common people. I believed that having an official position meant having power, being respected and revered wherever you go. When I was young, I did all kinds of dirty and tiring work in the village just to get an official position. I even worked in the fields late at night, like an unsung hero. But because of my low education, no matter how hard I tried, I could only be the head of the Women’s Federation in the village.

In 1999, I accepted God’s work of the last days and did my duty of preaching the gospel in the church. Seeing the upper-level leaders during gatherings surrounded by brothers and sisters asking them this and that, I felt very envious: Being a leader was good; everyone surrounded them wherever they went, how glorious! After God’s work was finished in the future, these leaders would definitely be saved by God. I must pursue earnestly; if I could become a leader in God’s house, not only would I be highly regarded by brothers and sisters, but I would also have more opportunities for salvation and perfection. As long as I pursued diligently and did my duty well, I would definitely have the opportunity to become a leader. At that time, the gospel had just spread to our area, and most of the people who accepted the gospel were brothers and sisters from our old church. As soon as they were disturbed by the pastors or they became negative or faced difficulties, I hurried to support them. The brothers and sisters all looked up to me, and they came to me with any difficulties they had. Although we hadn’t established a church at that time, and there was no

church leadership, what I did was leadership work. The brothers and sisters who accepted God's work of the last days together with me also said, "If someone else can't be chosen for leadership in the future, Li Jing will definitely be chosen." I felt delighted when I heard this, thinking, "Among the brothers and sisters who accepted with me, no one is better than me, and no one expended themselves more than I did, the brothers and sisters also support me, so when it's time to elect leadership, everyone will surely choose me." In the second half of 1999, the upper-level leaders came to our area for a gathering, saying they wanted to establish a church and elect a church leader. I was very happy, thinking it was a done deal that I would be chosen as a church leader. During the gathering, I confidently awaited the announcement of the election results by the upper leadership. But unexpectedly, Sister Liu Qing was chosen as the leader, and I was chosen as the gospel deacon. The moment I heard the results, my heart felt like it was doused with cold water, suddenly chilled to the core, my face sank, and I thought, "I'm busy all day preaching the gospel, watering new believers, and hosting brothers and sisters, busy all around, and I wasn't even chosen as a leader, isn't all this work in vain? Now that I haven't been chosen as a leader, the brothers and sisters will surely say I'm not as good as Liu Qing, how can I show my face?" After the gathering ended and I returned home, the more I thought about it, the more aggrieved I felt, and tears flowed without me realizing it. I was jealous of Liu Qing in my heart: Before, in our denomination, you weren't even as zealous as me, so what qualified you to be a leader? Once, Liu Qing came to ask me about watering new believers, and I was furious, thinking, "You don't understand anything and yet you're a leader? If you can't handle it, why didn't you say so earlier?" I impatiently replied, "Aren't you the leader? You figure it out yourself." Liu Qing said helplessly, "I asked you about these questions because I don't

understand.” Seeing her say that, I felt somewhat reproached in my heart, so I softened my tone and told her what to do. Because I wasn’t chosen as a leader, I always felt a sense of loss in my heart, and I couldn’t muster enthusiasm for my duties. Before, when I followed up on the gospel work, I would actively seek out the brothers and sisters to understand the situation of potential gospel recipients, and I would partner with them to preach the gospel, but now, even if there were no potential gospel recipients, I didn’t actively seek them out. Sometimes when I was alone at home, I thought, “I’m doing hospitality and preaching the gospel, and in the end, I wasn’t even chosen as a leader. What hope is there for salvation in the future?” The more I thought about it, the more negative I became, and I prayed to God about my state, “God, I didn’t become a leader, and I feel no motivation at all to do my duty; my heart feels uncomfortable. But I don’t know how to change this state. Please lead me to understand Your intention.”

During a morning devotional, I read these words of God: **“I love all those who sincerely want Me. If you focus on loving Me, I shall surely bless you tremendously. Do you understand My intentions? In My house, there is no distinction between high and low status. Everyone is My son, and I am your Father, your God. I am supreme and unique. I control the universe and all things!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 31). **“You ought to ‘serve Me with humility and in obscurity’ in My house. This phrase should serve as your motto. Do not be a leaf on a tree, but be the root of the tree and take root deeply in life. Enter into a genuine experience of life, live by My words, seek Me more in every matter, and draw near to Me and fellowship with Me. Do not pay attention to any external things, and do not be constrained by any person, event, or thing, but only fellowship with spiritual people about what I am. Understand My intentions, let**

My life flow among you, and live out My words and comply with My requirements” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 31). After reading God’s words, I understood that in God’s house, there is no distinction between high or low status. God’s intention is for us to pursue the truth, to obscurely do our duties well to satisfy Him. God does not want us to pursue status, but rather to pursue the truth and gain life. Gaining status is a kind of external glory, but it is meaningless and hollow. Just like how leaves, though beautiful, fall in autumn; flowers, though beautiful and praised by people, without bearing fruit, lack life. I always wanted to be a leader, to be supported, admired, listened to, and held up by people, to have status in their hearts, but what meaning did pursuing these things really have? God’s work of the last days was to judge and cleanse people, to supply them with truth. If I did not pursue the truth, if my corrupt disposition remained unchanged, and I did not gain the truth, then hadn’t I believed in vain? I held status in such high regard, felt negative without it, and lost enthusiasm for preaching the gospel. I realized that what I pursued wasn’t the truth but reputation and status, wasn’t that diverging from God’s intentions? I prayed to God, “God, my desire for status is too great. When I see others becoming leaders and I am not chosen, I become negative. In the world, I pursued being an official and a cadre member. Now that I am in God’s house, I’m still pursuing the same things. How is that any different from when I was a part of the world? God, I no longer want to pursue status. I am willing to fulfill my duties as a created being according to Your requirements to satisfy You.” Afterward, my state changed, and I became enthusiastic about preaching the gospel. When Liu Qing had difficulties and came to ask me, I would fellowship with her as long as I understood, feeling that this was all part of the church’s work, that when the sister had difficulties, I had a responsibility to help her, and that this was

also the duty I should do. Two months later, Liu Qing was dismissed because she couldn't do real work, and the brothers and sisters chose me to be the church leader. I felt especially happy in my heart, thinking this was God's favor, and I needed to work hard. Next, I selected leaders for each group, and fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters about the significance of preaching the gospel, and the effectiveness of preaching the gospel improved. I preached the gospel during the day and watered new believers at night, and if any brothers and sisters were negative or weak, I would visit them to offer support. Everyone welcomed me warmly, and if they had questions, they would come to me. Seeing the brothers and sisters gathering around me, respecting me greatly, I enjoyed this feeling very much, thinking, "Being a leader is good. If I do all of the church work well, there will be opportunities for further advancement. If I can become a senior leader, I will gain even more respect."

Later, the upper-level leaders came to gather with us, saying they wanted to select a preacher from several church leaders. I thought to myself, "Our church performs better in both the effectiveness of preaching the gospel and the life entry of brothers and sisters, and coupled with my recent arrest by the Communist Party and standing firm in my testimony, I have advantages in every aspect compared to them. I'm sure to be selected as the preacher this time." Unexpectedly, Sister Wang Xue was elected. I felt completely chilled in my heart, thinking, "Why was she chosen and not me? All of our church's work has the best results, where am I not better than her? Now that I wasn't chosen as a preacher, how would the brothers and sisters view me? Who would respect me in the future?" During the next gatherings, I didn't say anything, feeling that no matter how hard I tried or how busy or tired I was, what was the point? I was embarrassed to open up my state and seek a solution, afraid of losing face, so I kept it to myself.

Later, Wang Xue convened a gathering for several church leaders, and everyone listened attentively, but I took it pretty poorly. I thought being a preacher was really different, having prestige and respect wherever you go, with people listening to you. If I were the preacher, the brothers and sisters would surely revolve around me too, but now I had to listen to her, and that made me feel unbalanced. During the gathering, when she implemented the work, I felt reluctant to cooperate, thinking, “We used to be peers, and you’re no better than me, now you’re arranging work for us. If I follow your instructions, won’t that make me look inferior to you?” Wang Xue asked me about the problems in our church work, and I casually replied with an indifferent face, “Our church doesn’t have many problems. We’ve solved them on our own.” She then asked about the progress of our gospel work, and I didn’t want to answer anymore, so I replied with a stiff face, “The effectiveness of our gospel work goes without saying, other churches don’t even reach half of our monthly results.” When she asked about the situation with the newcomers, I became impatient, saying, “The newcomers are being watered by a few of us leaders and workers, and they’re doing well. If you don’t believe it, you can go and find out for yourself.” Wang Xue felt constrained by my attitude, and the atmosphere of the gathering became awkward. I was constantly living in a state of jealousy and dissatisfaction, and my soul was dark. I lost interest in doing my duties, just going through the motions. When there were potential gospel recipients, I didn’t want to preach the gospel to them anymore. The effectiveness of preaching the gospel began to decline. When leaders came to fellowship with me and help me, I was unable to listen. In the end, I was dismissed.

Afterward, I reflected on myself: Why did I feel uncomfortable and dissatisfied when Wang Xue became the preacher? So I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten and lead me to know and resolve my own issues.

Later, I read these words of God: **“In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to prune your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. ... For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don’t have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People’s thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them. ... Although you have arrived at this step today, you still have not let go of status but struggle constantly to inquire about it, and observe it daily, with a deep fear that one day your status will be lost and your name will be ruined. People have never put aside their desire for ease”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). From God’s words, I understood that this kind of situation today was meant to reveal my desire for status and my corruption, and to help me turn around my wrong views on pursuit. I had always pursued reputation and status, and after becoming a church leader, I even wanted to be a preacher and a higher leader, desiring to occupy a high position and enjoy the benefits of status. Before the preacher was selected, I used to get up early and work late preaching the gospel and

watering new believers, busy all day long, but when I failed to become a preacher, I became negative and negligent in my duties, not even wanting to preach the gospel when there were potential gospel recipients. Clearly, what I pursued was this status of leadership. I pondered: Why was I so obsessed with status? It was because I lived by the poisons of Satan, like “Man struggles upward; water flows downward” and “Officials are superior to the common folk,” thinking that one should strive in life to be superior to others and have a higher status, and that only then can they be highly regarded and respected by others, and live a valuable and meaningful life. Under the control of these thoughts, I was unwilling to be the smallest in the crowd. At sixteen or seventeen, in order to become a village cadre, I did all kinds of hard and tiring work in the village, working as an anonymous hero in the fields late at night. At nineteen, I became the head of the women’s federation in our village. After accepting God’s work of the last days, when the upper-level leaders gathered us together, with the brothers and sisters surrounding them seeking answers, I envied them in my heart. In order to be selected as a leader, I forsook and expended myself, working diligently from dawn till dusk, willing to endure any hardship. After becoming a church leader, I even wanted to be a preacher, desiring to having a higher position. When I wasn’t chosen as a preacher, I couldn’t accept not having status, rejecting the newly elected preacher. I was unwilling to listen to her fellowship and work implementation, and when she inquired after our church work, I was indifferent, showing disdain and contempt toward her, which led her to feel constrained by me. The fact that I could exclude and degrade others when I didn’t attain status showed that I was truly malicious! What I revealed was the disposition of an antichrist. God is the Creator. Only God is worthy of worship and reverence. I was just a created being, a corrupt person. What qualification did I have to make

others look up to me? I truly lacked reason and shame! God gave me the opportunity to practice doing the duty of a leader, hoping that I would pursue the truth, cooperate with brothers and sisters in harmony, complement each others' strengths and make up for shortcomings, and perform our duties well together, but I did not pursue the truth, always pursuing status to make others admire me. For the sake of reputation and status, I could even be jealous and envious, constraining and excluding others, causing harm to brothers and sisters, and disruptions to the work of the church. I realized that pursuing status was the path of resisting God, and if I didn't repent, I would ultimately face God's punishment. I prayed to God, "Oh God, I'm such a corrupt person, always seek to be admired by others, my actions and deeds are so hateful to You. I am willing to turn back to You, no longer pursuing reputation and status. Please lead me onto the path of pursuing the truth."

One day, I read more of God's words: **"Man has never loved Me sincerely. When I exalt him, he feels himself unworthy, but this does not make him try to satisfy Me. He merely holds the 'station' I have given him in his hands and scrutinizes it; insensible to My loveliness, he instead persists in engorging himself on the benefits of his station. Is this not the deficiency of man? When the mountains move, could they make a detour for the sake of your station? When the waters flow, could they cease before man's station? Could the heavens and the earth be reversed by man's station?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 22). **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be**

punished. This is an immutable fact. Therefore, all those who are punished are so punished for the righteousness of God and as retribution for their numerous evil acts” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). After reading God’s words, I understood that status cannot save people, and that when disaster strikes, having status will not ensure survival. God determines people’s destinations and outcomes based on whether they possess the truth. Regardless of their status, as long as they pursue the truth and their disposition undergoes transformation, they can obtain God’s salvation. Before, I thought that the higher the status, the greater the chance of being saved and perfected, so I relentlessly pursued status, willing to abandon everything and endure any hardship at any cost to obtain status. I made obtaining status the goal of pursuit and direction of my life. When I was not chosen as a leader or a preacher, I became negative and lost enthusiasm for doing my duty. Living with this wrong viewpoint brought me much pain, caused harm to brothers and sisters, and damaged the work of the church. I thought of how Paul had high status in the religious circles, preached the gospel, gained many people, and established many churches, but he did not pursue the truth, his life disposition did not change, and in the end, he faced God’s punishment. While Peter’s work may not have been as extensive as Paul’s, Peter pursued the truth, pursued loving God, and sought to fulfill the duties of a created being; in the end, Peter was perfected by God and obtained God’s approval. I used to live according to the wrong viewpoint, walking the same path as Paul. If I continued down this path, I would definitely end up with the same fate as Paul.

Later, I read another passage of God’s words, which made the path of practice clearer. Almighty God says: **“People are created beings who have nothing worthy of boasting about. Since you are created beings, you**

must perform the duty of a created being. There are no other requirements of you. This is how you should pray: ‘Oh God! Whether I have status or not, I now understand myself. If my status is high it is because of Your elevation, and if it is low it is because of Your ordination. Everything is in Your hands. I have neither any choices, nor any complaints. You ordained that I would be born in this country and among this people, and all that I should do is to be completely submissive under Your dominion because everything is within what You have ordained. I do not give thought to status; after all, I am but a created being. If You place me in the bottomless pit, in the lake of fire and brimstone, I am nothing but a created being. If You use me, I am a created being. If You perfect me, I am yet a created being. If You do not perfect me, I will still love You because I am no more than a created being. I am nothing more than a minuscule created being of the Lord of creation, just one among all created humans. It was You who created me, and now You have once again placed me in Your hands to do with me as You will. I am willing to be Your tool and Your foil because everything is what You have ordained. No one can change it. All things and all events are in Your hands.’ When the time comes that you will no longer give thought to status, then you will break free from it. Only then will you be able to confidently and boldly seek, and only then can your heart become free of any constraints. Once people have been extricated from these things, then they will have no more concerns” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). From God’s words, I understood that regardless of whether people had status or not, they were all created beings, and in God’s eyes, they were the same. Whether someone had status or not, it was all predetermined by God. Whichever person did what duties and possessed what caliber and gifts, it

was all determined by God. As created beings, people should submit to God's arrangements and sovereignty. Previously, I always had ambitions to become a leader. After becoming a church leader, I even desired to be a preacher. However, based on my caliber and stature, I was fundamentally unsuitable to be a preacher. When the church was newly established, my role as a church leader mainly involved preaching the gospel and watering new believers, and I was good at preaching the gospel and achieved some results. However, the role of a preacher involved managing multiple churches, it needed good work competency and the ability to fellowship on the truth and resolve problems; my life entry was poor and I wasn't up to the work of a preacher. I should have submitted to God's arrangements. Now, I was assigned to preach the gospel, and I should fulfill my duty of preaching the gospel. Realizing this, I prayed to God, "Oh God, I had been pursuing status and not submitting to Your sovereignty and arrangements, which harms the church's work. Now, I am willing to repent and pursue being a created being, subject to Your orchestrations."

In 2015, the church held a new election for leadership, and I heard that many brothers and sisters wanted to choose me. At that moment, I felt both happy and surprised. It seemed that the brothers and sisters held me in high regard, proving that I had some truth reality. If chosen, I thought, I would be respected wherever I went among the brothers and sisters. But as I had this thought, I knew my desire for status was at play again. Reflecting on how my pursuit of status caused me much suffering and harmed the church's work in the past, I decided I no longer wanted to pursue status. I should instead submit to God's arrangement and fulfill my duties well. I silently prayed to God in my heart, willing to let go of my desire for status and any wrong pursuits. I no longer wanted to pursue fame or status. I was willing to submit to whatever duties I was assigned. Before the vote, the

upper leaders asked each of us to share our thoughts. I opened up and said, “Although I have believed in God for over ten years, my life entry is shallow; my nature is arrogant, and I have a strong desire for status, so being in a leadership position would make it easy for me to enjoy the benefits of status and constrain others. I don’t think I am suitable for a leadership role. I am sharing my true situation with you all; you can evaluate me based on the principles.” After speaking, I felt very at peace. In the end, the brothers and sisters selected two other sisters as church leaders, and I was chosen as a gospel deacon. I felt very grateful to God and was willing to do my duty wholeheartedly. After that, I focused on my gospel work. The two church leaders had just started practicing, so when I noticed certain aspects of their work were not suitable, I would bring it up and fellowship with them to turn it around. I felt that this approach was good.

In the past, whenever I saw someone in a leadership position, I would become restless, treating leadership as the goal of my pursuit. Now I understand that only by pursuing the truth can one attain salvation. Pursuing status is meaningless. I have also learned to let go of my desire for status from the bottom of my heart. No matter who becomes a leader, I can treat them correctly. I only wish to pursue the truth steadfastly, fulfill my duties well, and comfort God’s heart.

56. After I Found Out About My Mother's Death

By Zhang Meng, China

My father got sick and died before I turned one year old. My mom had to work two jobs to raise us five kids. She worked from dawn to dusk every day and was both mother and father to us. My heart ached and I made a silent vow, “When I grow up, I’m going to look after mom so that she can live without worry.” To lessen my mom’s burden, I helped do chores after school, but my mom loved me so much she didn’t want that and just wanted me to study hard. I said to her, “You’re so exhausted. Won’t it make your life a little easier if I helped you?” My mom replied, “It doesn’t matter that I’m tired. When you kids are grown up and looking after me, won’t I be living a comfortable life? Look at your cousin, her mom died early and her dad raised her by himself. After she got married, she took care of everything for her dad—food, clothing, and everything else he needed. Isn’t he living a comfortable life?” One time, my cousin said to me, “Crows know to feed their parents. My dad endured all kinds of hardships to raise me. If I don’t take care of him, then wouldn’t I be no better than a beast?” I thought then that I wanted to be just like my cousin when I grew up and look after my mom. After I married, although I didn’t have a good job or good income, I did all I could to help my mom materially, and I often brought her to my home to look after her. My neighbors all praised me, saying, “Although her daughter lives far away, she does the most to take care of her mother.” This made me feel so good. I felt that this is how I, as a child, should act and that only by doing this could I repay my mother’s kindness.

In 1999, I accepted God’s new work. From God’s words, I understood God’s urgent intention to save man and joined in with preaching the gospel.

Toward the end of 2003, I was arrested while preaching the gospel. After being released, I was forced to leave home to work and rented a place to avoid the police tailing and surveilling me. I heard later that the police went to my village secretly looking into me three times in six months, asking where I was renting a place. From then on, I lived like a vagrant and couldn't bring my mom to my home and look after her like I used to. I felt so indebted to my mom. Especially when I heard that she had been abused by my sister-in-law when she was sick, I felt heartbroken and upset, and even regretted having gone out to preach the gospel. "If I hadn't preached the gospel, I wouldn't have been arrested, and I wouldn't have had to leave home. Then I'd be able to be by my mom's side taking care of her." I realized that my state was wrong, and that preaching the gospel was my responsibility and mission. Wasn't me regretting preaching the gospel and doing my duty a manifestation of betraying God? At a gathering, I told the leader about my state and the leader showed me a passage of God's words: **"People all live in a state of feelings, and so God does not avoid a single one of them, and exposes the secrets hidden in the hearts of all mankind. Why is it so hard for people to separate themselves from their feelings? Does doing so surpass the standards of conscience? Can conscience fulfill God's will? Can feelings help people through adversity? In God's eyes, feelings are His enemy—has this not been clearly stated in God's words?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 28). After reading God's words, I realized that I was indeed living in my feelings, and that feelings had pulled the wool over my eyes so that I couldn't tell right from wrong. I was preaching the gospel so that people could come before God and accept His salvation. This was a just thing and the duty I should do. Since ancient times, haven't there been many true believers who've

forsaken everything to follow and expend for God? Take Peter. When the Lord Jesus called him, he immediately dropped his fishing nets and followed the Lord. Realizing this, I gained more faith. I resolved to do my duty well and satisfy God, and so I went to preach the gospel again.

In the fall of 2015, a church sister told me that my mom had died. I was heartbroken and upset when I heard this. I struggled not to cry, and thought, “How could my mom be gone? Did she get depressed and sick because I wasn’t by her side and she was missing me and worried about me? If it weren’t for the CCP’s persecution, I could have been beside her looking after her more, making her comfortable in her final years, and maybe she would have lived a few more years.” The more I thought about it, the more distressed I got. As I left the sister’s house, my tears streamed down my face. My mom suffered so much to raise me but when she got old and sick, I couldn’t be with her to take care of her, and I couldn’t even be with her in her final moments. Thinking this, I cried my eyes out and felt much pain. I wiped my eyes and rode my bike and as I rode, scenes of how my mom had struggled to raise me played in my mind like a movie. I felt so indebted to my mom and she’d died before I had the chance to be a good filial daughter. I couldn’t even be with her in her final moments. Would other people say I was a bad daughter, an ungrateful wretch? When I got back to my host home, I was too distressed to eat. The host sister comforted me, saying, “Everyone’s lifespan is in God’s hands. When someone is born and when they die is ordained by God. Don’t be too sad. Pray more to God.” I didn’t feel so pained and upset after she said this, but my heart still wouldn’t calm down when doing my duty, so I prayed to God, asking Him to lead me from this negative state. After praying, I read a passage of God’s words: **“God created this world and brought man, a living being unto which He bestowed life, into it. Next, man came to have parents and**

kin, and was no longer alone. Ever since man first laid eyes on this material world, he was destined to exist within the ordination of God. The breath of life from God supports each and every living being throughout growth into adulthood. During this process, no one feels that man is growing up under the care of God; rather, they believe that man is doing so under the loving care of his parents, and that it is his own life instinct that directs his growing up. This is because man knows not who bestowed his life, or from whence it came, much less the way in which the instinct of life creates miracles” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life). I understood from God’s words that God created the heavens and earth and all things, and He bestows life on man. On the surface, it looked like my mom had raised me but if it weren’t for God’s care and protection, I’d never have survived till now. I thought about how my daughter had contracted a terminal illness at five years old. I was extremely grief-stricken and wanted to donate my organs to her. The doctor said, “It’s no use. Treating this illness won’t save her life. She has a terminal illness and no one can save her.” God long ago ordained our lives and deaths, and no one can change this. My mom’s time to die was also in God’s hands and ordained by Him yet I’d believed that she died of depression and sickness brought on by missing and worrying about me. I didn’t recognize God’s sovereignty! Especially thinking about how my mother struggled to raise me into adulthood after my father passed away, and about how she’d grown old and gotten sick and I wasn’t able to take care of her, I felt indebted to her, and my heart wouldn’t calm down in my duty. In fact, man’s life comes from God and everything I enjoy is bestowed by God. I didn’t feel indebted to God for not doing my duty well, but instead always felt indebted to my mom, to the point where I regretted doing my duty. I really wasn’t worthy to be called human!

Later, I read God's words in which He fellowshiped about "your parents are not your creditors," and my views underwent a change. Almighty God says: **"Let's look at the matter of your parents giving birth to you. Who was it that chose for them to give birth to you: you or your parents? Who chose whom? If you look at this from God's perspective, the answer is: neither of you. Neither you nor your parents chose for them to give birth to you. If you look at the root of this matter, this was ordained by God. We'll put this topic to one side for now, as this matter is easy for people to understand. From your perspective, you were passively born to your parents, without having any choice in the matter. From the perspective of your parents, they gave birth to you through their own independent will, right? In other words, putting aside God's ordination, when it comes to the matter of giving birth to you, it was your parents who had all the power. They chose to give birth to you, and they called all the shots. You did not choose for them to give birth to you, you were passively born to them, and you didn't have any choice in the matter. So, since your parents had all the power, and they chose to give birth to you, they have an obligation and a responsibility to bring you up, to raise you into an adult, to supply you with an education, with food, clothes, and money—this is their responsibility and obligation, and it is what they ought to do. Whereas you were always passive during the period that they were raising you, you didn't have the right to choose—you had to be raised by them. Because you were young, you didn't have the capacity to raise yourself, you had no choice but to be passively brought up by your parents. You were raised in the way that your parents chose, if they gave you nice food and drinks, then you ate and drank nice food and drinks. If your parents provided you with a living environment where**

you survived off chaff and wild plants, then you survived off chaff and wild plants. In any case, when you were being raised, you were passive, and your parents were fulfilling their responsibility. It's the same as your parents caring for a flower. Since they want to care for a flower, they should fertilize it, water it, and make sure that it gets sunlight. So, regarding people, no matter whether your parents looked after you meticulously or took great care of you, in any case, they were just fulfilling their responsibility and obligation. Regardless of the reason why they raised you, it was their responsibility—because they gave birth to you, they should take responsibility for you. Based on this, can everything that your parents did for you be considered kindness? It can't, right? (That's right.) Your parents fulfilling their responsibility to you doesn't count as kindness, so if they fulfill their responsibility toward a flower or a plant, watering it and fertilizing it, does that count as kindness? (No.) That is even further from being kindness. Flowers and plants grow better outside—if they're planted in the ground, with wind, sun, and rainwater, they thrive. They don't grow as well when they're planted in a pot indoors as they do outside, but wherever they are, they're living, right? No matter where they are, it has been ordained by God. You are a living person, and God takes responsibility for every life, enabling it to survive, and to follow the law that all created beings abide by. But as a person, you live in the environment that your parents raise you in, so you should grow up and exist in that environment. You living in that environment is on a larger scale due to God's ordination; on a smaller scale, it is due to your parents raising you, right? In any case, by raising you your parents are fulfilling a responsibility and an obligation. Raising you into an adult is their obligation and responsibility, and this cannot be called kindness. If it

cannot be called kindness, then is it not something that you ought to enjoy? (It is.) This is a kind of right that you should enjoy. You should be raised by your parents, because before you reach adulthood, the role that you play is that of a child being brought up. Therefore, your parents are just fulfilling a kind of responsibility toward you, and you are just receiving it, but you are certainly not receiving grace or kindness from them. ... Raising you is your parents' responsibility. They chose to give birth to you, so they have a responsibility and an obligation to bring you up. By raising you into an adult, they are fulfilling their responsibility and their obligation. You do not owe them anything, so you do not need to recompense them. You don't need to recompense them—this clearly shows that your parents are not your creditors, and that you do not need to do anything for them in return for their kindness. If your circumstances allow you to fulfill a bit of your responsibility to them, then do so. If your environment and your objective circumstances do not permit you to fulfill your obligation toward them, then you don't need to give it too much thought, and you shouldn't think that you are indebted to them, because your parents **are not your creditors**" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). God's words allowed me to understand that God holds sovereignty over and arranges every person coming into this world. My being born into this family was also ordained by God. No matter how much suffering my mom endured to raise me, this was her responsibility and I shouldn't regard it as kindness. Just as God says: **"Since your parents had all the power, and they chose to give birth to you, they have an obligation and a responsibility to bring you up, to raise you into an adult, to supply you with an education, with food, clothes, and money—this is their responsibility and obligation, and it is what they ought to do."** But I

didn't understand the truth and didn't see things according to God's words. I always believed that, after my dad died, my mom became both mother and father, living frugally so that I could go to school, struggling to raise me into adulthood, and without my mother's careful care and nurturing, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I regarded my mother's care as kindness and always wanted to repay her for this nurturing kindness. The moment I heard she had died, I felt so distressed and that I hadn't looked after her well. I couldn't even be with her in her final moments and so I felt I was a bad daughter. I felt only indebted to her and wasn't in any mood to do my duty. If I kept on living in this indebtedness to my mom and wasn't able to do my duty then I really would be without conscience or humanity. When I thought of my mom's death, even if I could have been with her at the end, I wouldn't have been able to save her life. Even if others had praised me as a good daughter, what meaning would that have had?

I then read more of God's words. God says: **“Due to the conditioning of Chinese traditional culture, in Chinese people's traditional notions they believe that one must observe filial piety toward their parents. Whoever does not observe filial piety is an unfilial child. These ideas have been instilled in people since childhood, and they are taught in practically every household, as well as in every school and in society at large. When a person's head has been filled with such stuff, they think, ‘Filial piety is more important than anything. If I weren't to observe it, I wouldn't be a good person—I'd be an unfilial child and I'd be denounced by society. I'd be a person who lacks conscience.’ Is this view correct? People have seen so many truths expressed by God—has God demanded that one show filial piety toward their parents? Is this one of the truths that believers in God must understand? No, it is not. God has only fellowshiped on some principles. By what principle do**

God's words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. ... Satan uses this kind of traditional culture and notions of morality to bind your thoughts, your mind, and your heart, leaving you unable to accept God's words; you have been possessed by these things of Satan, and rendered incapable of accepting God's words. When you want to practice God's words, these things cause disturbance within you, cause you to oppose the truth and God's requirements, and make you powerless to rid yourself of the yoke of traditional culture. After struggling for a while, you compromise: You prefer to believe traditional notions of morality are correct and in line with the truth, and so you reject or forsake God's words. You do not accept God's words as the truth and you think nothing of being saved, feeling that you still live in this world, and can only survive by relying on these people. Unable to endure society's recrimination, you would rather choose to give up the truth and God's words, abandoning yourself to traditional notions of morality and the influence of Satan, preferring to offend God and not practice the truth. Is man not pitiful? Do they not have need of God's salvation?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). **"There is a saying in the world of nonbelievers: 'Crows repay their mothers by feeding them, and lambs kneel to receive milk from their mothers.' There's also this saying: 'An unfilial person is lower than a beast.' How grandiose these sayings sound! Actually, the phenomena that the first**

saying mentions, crows repaying their mothers by feeding them, and lambs kneeling to receive milk from their mothers, really do exist, these are facts. However, they are simply phenomena within the animal world. They are merely a kind of law that God has established for various living creatures, and by which all kinds of living creatures, including humans, abide. The fact that all kinds of living creatures abide by this law further demonstrates that all living creatures are created by God. No living creature can break this law, and no living creature can transcend it. ... Crows repaying their mothers by feeding them, and lambs kneeling to receive milk from their mothers demonstrates precisely that the animal world abides by this kind of law. All kinds of living creatures have this instinct. Once offspring are born, they are cared for and nurtured by the females or males of the species until they become adults. All kinds of living creatures are able to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations to their offspring, conscientiously and dutifully raising the next generation. This should be even more the case for humans. Humans are called higher animals by mankind—if they cannot abide by this law, and lack this instinct, then humans are lower than animals, aren't they? Therefore, no matter how much your parents nurtured you while they were raising you, and how much they fulfilled their responsibility to you, they were only doing what they ought to within the scope of the abilities of a created human—it was their instinct” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). After reading God's words, I understood this: The reason I was in so much pain was because I'd been influenced by the ideas and views like “An unfilial person is lower than a beast” and “Raise children to support you in old age.” I'd thought that being filial to one's parents was perfectly natural and justified and not doing this was treasonous and made

one lower than a beast. I'd been on the run and hadn't been able to look after my mom at home so I had a guilty conscience and felt indebted to her. I was also afraid that people would say I had no conscience and was a bad daughter, so I'd felt such pain and hadn't been able to calmly do my duty, and I fell to pieces later when I heard my mom had passed away. I saw that I'd been instilled with these ideas of traditional culture and regarded being filial to my parents as more important than doing my duty of a created being, and I'd even regretted preaching the gospel and doing my duty—hadn't this been a manifestation of betraying God? Because I'd been arrested by the police for preaching the gospel, I wasn't able to return home. But instead of hating the CCP, I'd blamed God believing that this had been caused by preaching the gospel. I'd really got it all backward and couldn't tell what was right and what wasn't! Everything I have comes from God. He had been caring for and protecting me all those years so that I'd have the chance to preach the gospel and do my duty, pursue the truth and be saved by God. Not only had I not been grateful to God, but I'd misunderstood and blamed Him, and even regretted doing my duty. I really had been without conscience! Only then did I understand that the ideas and views like “An unfilial person is lower than a beast” and “Raise children to support you in old age” were fallacious, and that they were a way in which Satan misleads and corrupts people. I didn't want to live by Satan's ideas and views anymore but wanted to view people and things and comport myself and act according to God's words.

I later read more of God's words: **“First of all, most people choose to leave home to perform their duties in part because of the overarching objective circumstances, which necessitate them leaving their parents; they cannot stay by their parents' side to take care of them and accompany them. It's not that they willingly choose to leave their**

parents; this is the objective reason. For another thing, subjectively speaking, you go out to perform your duties not because you wanted to leave your parents and escape your responsibilities, but because of God's calling. In order to cooperate with God's work, accept His calling, and perform the duties of a created being, you had no choice but to leave your parents; you could not stay by their side to accompany them and take care of them. You didn't leave them to avoid responsibilities, right? Leaving them to avoid your responsibilities and having to leave them to answer God's calling and perform your duties—aren't these of two different natures? (Yes.) In your heart, you do have emotional attachments and thoughts for your parents; your feelings are not empty. If objective circumstances allow, and you are able to stay by their side while also performing your duties, then you would be willing to stay by their side, regularly taking care of them and fulfilling your responsibilities. But because of objective circumstances, you must leave them; you cannot remain at their side. It's not that you don't want to fulfill your responsibilities as their child, but that you can't. Isn't this different in nature? (Yes.) If you left home to avoid being filial and fulfilling your responsibilities, that is unfilial and lacks humanity. Your parents raised you, but you can't wait to spread your wings and quickly go off on your own. You don't want to see your parents, and you don't pay any regard when you hear about some difficulty they've encountered. Even if you have the means to help, you don't; you just pretend not to hear and let others say whatever they want about you—you simply don't want to fulfill your responsibilities. This is being unfilial. But is this the case now? (No.) Many people have left their counties, cities, provinces, or even their countries to perform their duties; they are already far away from their hometowns.

Furthermore, it's not convenient for them to stay in touch with their families for various reasons. Occasionally, they inquire about their parents' current situation from people who came from the same hometown and feel relieved when they hear that their parents are still healthy and getting by okay. In fact, you are not unfilial; you haven't reached the point of lacking humanity, where you don't even want to care about your parents or fulfill your responsibilities toward them. It's because of various objective reasons that you have to make this choice, so you're not unfilial" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (16)). **"As a child, you should understand that your parents are not your creditors. There are many things that you must do in this life, and these are all things that a created being ought to do, that have been entrusted to you by the Lord of creation, and they have nothing to do with you repaying your parents' kindness. Showing filial piety to your parents, repaying them, returning their kindness—these things have nothing to do with your mission in life. It can also be said that it is not necessary for you to show filial piety to your parents, to repay them, or to fulfill any of your responsibilities to them. To put it plainly, you can do a bit of this and fulfill a bit of your responsibilities when your circumstances allow; when they do not, you do not need to insist upon doing so. If you cannot fulfill your responsibility to show filial piety to your parents, this is not a terrible thing, it just goes against your conscience, human morality, and human notions a little. But at the very least, it does not go against the truth, and God will not condemn you for it. When you understand the truth, your conscience will not feel rebuked on account of this"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). From God's words, I came to understand how children should treat their parents. My mom was not my creditor. I came into this

world with a mission to fulfill, which is to do the duty of a created being. If circumstances and conditions had allowed, then I could have looked after and been filial to mom and fulfilled a child's responsibilities and obligations. If circumstances didn't allow, then I didn't need to insist upon it. Also, it wasn't that I didn't want to be filial to my mom, it was because I was persecuted and pursued by the CCP that I couldn't go home to take care of her. It wasn't that I wasn't filial and I didn't need to care about what anyone else thought of me. What was most crucial was that I should submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements and do my duty well. Understanding this, I no longer felt constrained and I could put my heart into my duty. It was the judgment and exposure of God's words that enabled me to understand some of my own fallacious views, comprehend how to approach my mom in a way that accords with the truth principles, not live feeling indebted to my mom anymore and be able to calm my heart and do my duty.

57. Why Is It So Difficult to Recommend Others?

By Steven, USA

I was in charge of graphic design at the church, and in addition to doing my own graphic design, every day I also had to follow up with the team's work and resolve the brothers and sisters' problems. Although I was busy every day, whenever the brothers and sisters had problems and came to ask me, accepting basically all of the advice I gave them, I felt happy, enjoying this feeling of being admired by everyone.

Later, a few new brothers and sisters joined the team. They weren't very good at graphic design, and they needed my help and guidance. All at once, I felt a lot of pressure. Every day I had to do graphic design myself, and I also had to direct these brothers and sisters and follow up on the work of others. I was already in over my head, but I would've been fine if there was somebody to partner with me. I thought of Cheyenne. She was adept at technology, was responsible in the performance of her duty, and could get basically all of the work I entrusted her done seriously. I wanted to recommend Cheyenne to the supervisor and promote her to team leader so that she could partner with me. With the two of us sharing the workload, our work would become more efficient, and when there were problems we could discuss them together. But when I was about to tell the supervisor, I suddenly thought, "If Cheyenne really does become team leader, will there ever come a time when she steals my thunder? If that happens, when the brothers and sisters have difficulties, they won't consult with me, and my status in their hearts won't be as high. Being a team leader was the result of my continuous work and striving: I taught everybody the technique of graphic design and resolved their problems and difficulties. Now, if I were to recommend Cheyenne, I would split my status and power in half and

share them with her—wouldn't I end up losing out?" When I thought of this, I swallowed my recommendation of Cheyenne. I thought, "Just wait a little. Put in some more thought, pay a bit more price, perhaps I really can take on the work—in the end, all the credit will go to me." After some time, the church arranged for me to take on another task, so I didn't have enough time to follow up on the brothers and sisters' work and studies of professional skills. I grew worried that if things kept on like this, the work of cultivating people would certainly become delayed. My own time and energy were too limited. So once again I wished to recommend Cheyenne to the supervisor, but when I was actually about to speak, I hesitated again, "I am the one who makes the final decision for all of the work in the team, and if there were going to be two team leaders, I would lose this power. I would have to communicate and discuss every matter with the other person, and my own words wouldn't be worth as much anymore. Why don't I just bear it by myself for now? If there's some work that I can't make time to oversee, I'll follow up on it little by little. Besides, cultivating people doesn't happen in one or two days, and it's not like I'm disrupting or disturbing things on purpose. I'm just not recommending anyone else—God probably won't condemn me." Later, the cultivation work progressed slowly, and every time I thought about it, I felt guilty. So I prayed to God, saying, "O God, based on the personnel situation and workload right now, it would be beneficial to the work for two team leaders to partner up; I want to recommend Cheyenne, but I can't speak up. Why is it so difficult for me to recommend others? Please enlighten and guide me to know my own issues."

After that, I opened up my state to the leader, and the leader sent me some of God's words. God says: **"As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also need to**

learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your loyalty. Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God's house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God's intentions, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). When I read God's words, I understood that leaders and workers ought to learn how to discover and cultivate talented people, that this is profitable to the work of the church, and that it is the conscience and sense that people should possess. If someone has misgivings about recommending people affecting their status and suppresses those talented people, this is envying the able

and being selfish and base. So I reflected on myself. Some brothers and sisters had just started to practice graphic design. They needed to be cultivated and their professional techniques improved. It was really too much for me to do alone, and I clearly understood that only with a partner could I bear this work, and that Cheyenne would make a suitable team leader and recommending her would be beneficial to the work. However, I worried that if she came to do the work better than me, the brothers and sisters would admire her and ignore me, and I would lose my status. I believed that I would suffer losses, so I didn't recommend Cheyenne. I also thought that if I could endure a lot of suffering and pay a huge price to shoulder this work, in the end, the credit would be mine alone. So I gritted my teeth and did the work myself, and as a result the work of cultivating others progressed slowly. Actually, God was uplifting me and treating me graciously by allowing me to do the duty of team leader, but I wasn't considerate of God's intentions. Not only did I not cultivate talented people, I even worried that Cheyenne might do her duty well and surpass me. I watched the work become delayed and still was unwilling to recommend her. In doing my duty, I only safeguarded my own fame, gain, and status, and I didn't consider the progress or results of the work. I really was too selfish, and showed not the least bit of loyalty toward my duty!

Later, I read more of God's words: **"What do you say, is it hard to cooperate with other people? It isn't, actually. You could even say it is easy. But why do people still feel this to be difficult? Because they have corrupt dispositions. For those who possess humanity, conscience, and reason, cooperating with others is relatively easy, and they can feel that this is something joyful. This is because it is not easy for anyone to accomplish things on their own, and whatever the field they're involved in, or what they're doing, it is always good to have someone there to**

point things out and offer assistance—much easier than doing it by themselves. Also, there are limits to what people’s caliber is capable of or what they themselves can experience. No one can be a master of all trades: It is impossible for one person to know everything, to be capable of everything, to accomplish everything—that is impossible, and everyone should possess such reason. And so, no matter what you do, whether it be important or not, you will always need someone there to help you, to give you pointers and advice, or to do things in cooperation with you. This is the only way to ensure that you will do things more correctly, make fewer mistakes and be less likely to go astray—it is a good thing. Serving God, in particular, is a big deal, and not resolving your corrupt disposition could put you in danger! When people have satanic dispositions, they can rebel against and oppose God in any time and at any place. People who live by satanic dispositions can deny, oppose, and betray God at any time. The antichrists are very stupid, they don’t realize this, they think, ‘I had enough trouble getting hold of power, why would I share it with anyone else? Giving it to others means I won’t have any for myself, doesn’t it? How can I demonstrate my talents and abilities without power?’ They do not know that what God has entrusted people with is not power or status, but a duty. Antichrists only accept power and status, they put their duties aside, and they don’t do actual work. Instead, they only pursue fame, gain and status, and only want to seize power, control God’s chosen people, and indulge in the benefits of status. Doing things this way is very dangerous—this is opposing God!” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God says that no one is a master of everything, we all need others to partner with and help us, making up for our shortcomings by learning from

each other. This way, we can reduce the mistakes and deviations in our work and fulfill our duties together in order to satisfy God. But antichrists lack this sense, and they constantly wish to monopolize power and have the final say, and never want to partner with others or let others participate in their work. Through reflection, I realized that I was just like that too. I was too busy to do the duty of team leader by myself, and there were a lot of tasks that I couldn't promptly arrange and implement, but when I wanted to recommend Cheyenne, I had misgivings about my own power becoming diluted. I believed that recommending Cheyenne as my partner would be equivalent to ceding my power as team leader. I wouldn't be able to have the final say, make all the decisions, or put myself on display in front of the brothers and sisters anymore. So I didn't want to recommend Cheyenne. I found out the reason why I was unable to recommend others or be partners with them. It was because I couldn't let go of the power and status in my hands. I placed too much emphasis on power.

Later, I sought out the answer to why I placed so much emphasis on power and status. I read a passage of God's words and gained some knowledge of myself. Almighty God says: **"For antichrists, status and reputation are their life. No matter how they live, no matter what environment they live in, no matter what work they do, no matter what they pursue, what their goals are, what their life's direction is, it all revolves around having a good reputation and a high status. And this aim does not change; they can never put aside such things. This is the true face of antichrists, and their essence. You could put them in a primeval forest deep in the mountains, and still they would not put aside their pursuit of reputation and status. You can put them among any group of people, and all they can think about is still reputation and status. Although antichrists also believe in God, they see the pursuit of**

reputation and status as equivalent to faith in God and give it equal weight. Which is to say, as they walk the path of faith in God, they also pursue their own reputation and status. It can be said that in antichrists' hearts, they believe that pursuit of the truth in their faith in God is the pursuit of reputation and status; the pursuit of reputation and status is also the pursuit of the truth, and to gain reputation and status is to gain the truth and life. If they feel that they have no reputation, gains, or status, that no one admires them, or esteems them, or follows them, then they are very disappointed, they believe there is no point in believing in God, no value to it, and they say to themselves, 'Is such faith in god a failure? Is it hopeless?' They often deliberate such things in their hearts, they deliberate how they can carve a place out for themselves in the house of God, how they can have a lofty reputation in the church, so that people listen when they talk, and support them when they act, and follow them wherever they go; so that they have the final say in the church, and fame, gain, and status—they really focus on such things in their hearts. These are what such people pursue. Why are they always thinking about such things? After reading the words of God, after hearing sermons, do they really not understand all this, are they really not able to discern all this? Are the words of God and the truth really not able to change their notions, ideas, and opinions? That is not the case at all. The problem lies in them, it is wholly because they do not love the truth, because, in their hearts, they are averse to the truth, and as a result, they are utterly unreceptive to the truth—which is determined by their nature essence” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God exposes that no matter where antichrists are or what work they do, they will never let go of their pursuit of status. They believe that as long as they can gain status and power, they

can win people's praise and admiration, and possess prestige, the right to speak, and the right to decide. They believe that this kind of life has value and meaning, and if they didn't have status it would rob them of life. This was exactly how I was. I had been heavily influenced by satanic poisons such as "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors" and "There can only be one alpha male." So, from a young age, I looked forward to making a name for myself when I grew up, for everyone to look up to me, and revolve around me wherever I went. I remember when I first started college, I shared the responsibilities of class monitor with another student. After some time, I felt that with two class monitors, I wouldn't get to shine, so I suggested that one class monitor be chosen from between us. I looked forward to being selected, so that from then on I could be at the center of everybody, the highest in the entire class—but I ended up losing. Since I didn't become class monitor, I turned down other positions of the class cadre in one go and didn't do them. When I came to the church, I still took gaining status as the goal of my pursuit, I believed that as the only team leader I could have the final say and everyone would look up to me. When it came to recommending Cheyenne, I believed that by doing so she would share in my status and power, and when one day she did the work better than me, I would then lose my say and never again enjoy the feeling of superiority associated with everyone setting me on a pedestal and listening to what I said. Because of this, I preferred to delay the work rather than recommend her. I became a slave to status. I thought of how back then, because I coveted the benefits of status and didn't do real work, I committed a transgression and was dismissed. It was then that I saw that living according to Satan's philosophy and laws could only make me walk a wrong path and resist God in spite of myself.

Later, I read another passage in God's words: **"Anyone who pursues fame, gain and status rather than properly doing their duty is playing with fire and playing with their life. Those who play with fire and their lives can doom themselves at any moment. Today, as a leader or a worker, you are serving God, which is no ordinary thing. You are not doing things for some person, much less working to pay bills and put food on the table; instead, you are performing your duty in the church. And given, in particular, that this duty came from God's commission, what does performing it imply? That you are accountable to God for your duty, whether you do it well or not; ultimately, an account must be given to God, there must be an outcome. What you have accepted is God's commission, a hallowed responsibility, so no matter how important or minor this responsibility is, it is a serious business. How serious is it? On a small scale it involves whether you can gain the truth in this lifetime and it involves how God views you. On a larger scale, it directly relates to your prospects and destiny, to your outcome; if you commit evil and oppose God, you will be condemned and punished. Everything you do when you perform your duty is recorded by God, and God has His own principles and standards for how it is scored and evaluated; God determines your outcome based on all that is manifested by you as you perform your duty. Is this a serious matter? It is, indeed! So, if you're assigned a task, is it your own matter to handle? (No.) That work is not a thing you can complete on your own, but it does require that you take on responsibility for it. The responsibility is yours; you must complete that commission. What does this touch on? It touches on cooperation, on how to cooperate in service, on how to cooperate to perform your duty, on how to cooperate to complete your commission, on how to cooperate such that you follow**

God's will. It touches on these things" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). I felt a little afraid when I finished reading God's words, especially when I read these words of God: **"Anyone who pursues fame, gain and status rather than properly doing their duty is playing with fire and playing with their life. Those who play with fire and their lives can doom themselves at any moment."** I saw that pursuing fame, gain, and status is equivalent to playing with fire and with one's life, not considering one's life to be important. One's duty is a commission from God, a very serious matter. But I took my duty as a tool to gain power and status; even though I knew that I couldn't take on this work alone, I didn't go out and recommend Cheyenne to be my partner, not considering in the slightest whether the work of the church would be affected. This was something that resisted and offended God; wasn't I playing with fire? As team leader, not only did I fail to fulfill my own duty, the work was delayed under my care. This couldn't be accounted for to God! I only pursued fame, gain, status, and making people look up to me, and the path which I took was the path of antichrists. If I hadn't repented, I wouldn't have had a good outcome and destination. When I recognized this, that's when I saw that the viewpoint which I believed before of, "Even though I'm not recommending others, as long as I don't disrupt and disturb in plain sight, God won't condemn me," was not in line with the truth. Although on the outside I appeared busy in the performance of my duty, suffering and paying the price, not doing anything clearly evil, yet in order to safeguard my own power and status, I would rather delay the work than to recommend Cheyenne. All I thought about was how to protect my own fame, gain, and status—everything I thought was evil and condemned by God. God scrutinizes people's hearts and

minds. If I didn't leave the evil path and still pursued reputation and status, in the end I could only be condemned and punished by God.

Later, I read another two passages of God's words and found the path of practice. Almighty God says: **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's intentions, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should show consideration for God's intentions, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy**

your own interests will lessen” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition).

“As a leader or a worker, if you always think yourself above others, and revel in your duty like it’s a government post, always indulging in the benefits of your status, always making your own plans, always considering and enjoying your own fame, gain and status, always running your own operation, and always seeking to gain higher status, to manage and control more people, and to expand the scope of your power, this is trouble. It is very dangerous to treat an important duty as a chance to enjoy your position as if you are a government official. If you always act like this, not wishing to cooperate with others, not wanting to dilute your power and share it with anyone else, not wanting anyone else to upstage you, to steal the limelight, if you only want to enjoy the power on your own, then you are an antichrist. But if you often seek the truth, practice rebelling against your flesh, your motivations and ideas, and are able to take it upon yourself to cooperate with others, open up your heart to consult and seek with others, attentively listen to others’ ideas and suggestions, and accept advice which is correct and aligns with the truth, no matter who it comes from, then you are practicing in a wise and correct manner, and you are able to avoid taking the wrong path, which is protection for you” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). As a believer in God, having eaten and drunk so many of God’s words, I was unable to safeguard the church’s interests in the performance of my duty, but I spoke and acted everywhere for the sake of my own selfish desires, reputation, and status—I truly lacked conscience and reason, and was unworthy of doing my duty in the church. In God’s house, the truth rules, righteousness rules; whoever possesses

caliber and ability, and feels burdened by the work of the church, that person should be recommended, and they should be asked to take on the appropriate work in the church. By recommending other people, there is one more person to do the work of the church, which is beneficial to the progress of the work and to that of the brothers and sisters. If one always craves the benefits of status and wishes to monopolize power themselves, wanting to be above the rest and have the last say, unwilling to partner with others, that person will have gone down the path of an antichrist. But if they have a partner, and in the work they can discuss, learn from each other, and keep checks on one another, then they can avoid one person monopolizing power, and they can avoid going down the path of antichrists—this becomes a kind of invisible shield over themselves. When I pondered this, I realized that not only would recommending talented people benefit the work of the church, it would also help me. After that, I messaged the leader and recommended Cheyenne, and the leader agreed for Cheyenne and me to become partners. My heart then found great release and grew very light. From that moment, I discussed the work with Cheyenne, and then we shared responsibilities, and little by little, the results for cultivating people improved as well. Through this experience, I began to slowly understand what is said in God’s words: **“If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God’s house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). From God’s words, I saw that recommending others won’t cause my interests to suffer, and that it is practicing the truth and preparing good deeds. It’s

beneficial, both to me and to the work of the church. Practicing in this way makes me feel at ease. Thank God!

58. I've Learned How to Treat People Correctly

By An Yu, China

In 2023, I was doing the duty of a church leader and partnered with Sister He Li. Before, He Li became a leader and had some grasp of the principles of various tasks. After the two of us divided our work, I didn't have to worry too much about the work He Li was responsible for. Sometimes when I encountered difficulties at work, He Li could help me. Although the workload was large, with the two of us partnered together, I felt relaxed. In July, He Li was selected as a preacher and took on responsibilities for multiple churches. The work of our church was then placed solely on me, and I hoped to have someone to help share the workload as soon as possible. Later, Zhao Xin was elected as another church leader, and I was partnered with her. I was very happy. Zhao Xin had served as a watering deacon before and understood some church work. She should be able to pick it up quickly. Now that there was someone to share the work, I could take off some of the pressure. I told Zhao Xin about the tasks she needed to do, but because Zhao Xin was a bit older, she couldn't grasp things for a while, and most of the work was still done by me. I felt some resentment in my heart. Now I not only did my own work but also had to help guide Zhao Xin, which made the workload even greater than before. However, I thought that maybe Sister Zhao would become more familiar with the work after a few days of practice.

One day after a meeting, I realized that the watering work hadn't been followed up on. Then, I thought that Zhao Xin was more familiar with the watering work, so she would probably follow up on it. When I got home, I quickly asked Zhao Xin if she had followed up on the watering work. Zhao Xin said she hadn't had a gathering with them yet, so she didn't know. In an

instant, my anger surged up within me. I thought, “If you could do some of the work, wouldn’t it relieve my pressure? What’s the difference between two people doing the work and just me doing it?” I said in a tone of reproach, “If you could do some of the work, wouldn’t the efficiency improve? Think about what corrupt disposition is preventing you from doing it!” Zhao Xin didn’t say anything for some time, and at that moment, I realized that speaking like this would make her feel constrained, and that it might be inappropriate for me to treat her like this, especially since she had been living in her feelings and had a bad state during that time. Thinking of this, I felt somewhat reproached in my heart.

About half a month later, Liu Wen was elected to collaborate with us as a leader. Liu Wen did her duties conscientiously and was careful in her work, but being new, she didn’t grasp the principles of various tasks well. Problems always arose during her work, and she was pretty slow and lacking in work capabilities, so she often needed my help to make up for it. Originally, I thought having two sisters as partners could help share the workload, but instead of reducing it, it increased my burden. I felt a lot of pressure, and doing this duty was too hard and exhausting. In my heart, I couldn’t help but feel somewhat disdainful toward the two sisters and didn’t want to talk to them much. I was impatient when they asked me questions, and they felt constrained and didn’t dare to ask more. As a result, some tasks were delayed due to their inability to perform. During that time, both sisters were very negative, feeling like they had achieved nothing and weren’t up to the task of doing their duties, and I was still complaining that they weren’t effective. Now that I had partners, it seemed I was even more tired than before without them. Even though it’s work for three people, I ended up doing most of it and felt very disadvantaged. But if I didn’t do it, I was afraid of delaying the work and taking responsibility. As I thought

about it, tears began to flow uncontrollably, as if I had been greatly wronged. I didn't know how to face this environment; every day I sighed and felt deeply distressed. I thought if only I could leave this church, but then I realized that escaping wasn't the solution to the problem. So, I came before God in prayer, saying, "God, I know I have revealed many corrupt dispositions, but I don't know where to start understanding them. Please enlighten and lead me, so that I may know my corrupt dispositions." In my seeking, I read these words of God: **"Man's innate disposition belongs to hot-headedness. When damage is done to a person's interests, vainglory, or pride, if they do not understand the truth or have the truth reality, they will let their corrupt disposition dictate their treatment of that damage, and they will be impulsive and act rashly. What they manifest and reveal then is hot-headedness. Is hot-headedness a positive thing or a negative thing? It is obviously a negative thing. For a person to live in a hot-headed manner is no good thing; it is liable to bring about disaster. If someone's hot-headedness and corruption are exposed when things befall them, is that a person who seeks the truth and submits to God? Obviously, it is certain that such a person is not submissive to God. As for the various people, events, things, and environments that God arranges for people, if someone cannot accept them from God, instead coping with them and resolving them in a human way, what will result from that in the end? (God will spurn that person.) God will loathe that person, so will that be edifying for people? (No, it won't.) They will not only lose out in their own life but will also be of no edification to others. More than that, they will humiliate God and have Him spurn them. Such a person has lost their witness and is unwelcome wherever they go. If you are a member of God's house, yet you are always hot-headed in your actions, always**

expose what is natural in you, and always reveal your corrupt disposition, doing things with human means and with a corrupt, satanic disposition, the final consequence will be your doing evil and your resisting God—and if you remain unrepentant all the while and cannot tread upon the path of pursuing truth, you will have to be revealed and eliminated. Is the problem of living in reliance on a satanic disposition and not seeking the truth to resolve it not a grave one? One aspect of the problem is that one does not grow or change in their own life; beyond that, one will adversely influence others. They will not serve any good purpose in the church, and in time, they will bring great trouble to the church and to God’s chosen people, like a stinking fly that flies back and forth above a dining table, courting disgust and loathing. Do you want to be this kind of person? (No.)” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. A Corrupt Disposition Can Only Be Resolved by Accepting the Truth). What God exposed was my current situation. Why did I always feel annoyed and even pour forth hotheadedness and flare up at my partnered sisters? It’s because they weren’t meeting my expectations after being selected to lead. Instead of directly sharing the workload and easing my pressure, they required more of my energy to fellowship with them and help address the shortcomings in their work. I felt they were wasting my time and causing my flesh discomfort, which led to resistance in my heart. I didn’t seek the truth and lived in my corrupt disposition, despising them, flaring up at them, and pouring forth hotheadedness. This caused them to become negative and feel constrained, affecting our work. I truly lacked humanity!

Later on, I read more of God’s words: **“When it comes to performing certain special duties or more strenuous and tiring duties, in one respect, people must always contemplate on how to perform those**

duties, what hardships they should endure, and how they should uphold their duties and submit. In another respect, people must also examine what adulterations there are in their intentions and how these hinder their performance of their duties. People are born with an aversion toward suffering hardship—not a single individual derives more enthusiasm or more joy from enduring more hardship. Such people do not exist. It is the nature of man's flesh for people to feel worried and distressed as soon as their flesh endures hardship. But how much hardship do you have to endure now in the duty you perform? You only have to endure your flesh feeling a little tired and toiling a little. If you cannot endure even this little bit of hardship, can you be considered as having resolve? Can you be considered as sincerely believing in God? (No.) This won't do. ... Being able to endure hardship in performing one's duty is not an easy task. It is also not easy to perform a particular kind of work well. It is certain that the truth of God's words is at work within people who can do these things. It is not that they were born without fear of hardship and fatigue. Where could such a person be found? These people all have some motivation, and they have some of the truth of God's words as their foundation. When they take up their duties, their views and standpoints change—performing their duties becomes easier and enduring some fleshly hardship and fatigue begins to feel insignificant to them. Those who do not understand the truth and whose views on things haven't changed live according to human ideas, notions, selfish desires, and personal preferences, so they are reluctant and unwilling to perform their duties. For example, when it comes to doing dirty and tiring work, some people say, 'I will obey the arrangements of God's house. Whatever duty the church arranges for me, I will perform it, regardless of

whether it is dirty or tiring, whether it is impressive or unremarkable. I have no demands, and I will accept it as my duty. This is the commission that God has entrusted to me, and a little dirt and fatigue are the hardships that I should endure.’ As a result, when they are engaged in their work, they don’t feel they are enduring any hardship at all. While others may find it dirty and tiring, they find it easy, because their hearts are calm and undisturbed. They are doing it for God, so they don’t feel that it is difficult. Some people consider doing dirty, tiring, or unremarkable work an insult to their status and character. They perceive it as others not respecting them, bullying them, or looking down on them. As a result, even when faced with the same tasks and workload, they find it strenuous. Whatever they do, they carry a sense of resentment in their hearts, and feel that things are not the way they want them to be or that they are unsatisfactory. Inside, they are full of negativity and resistance. Why are they negative and resistant? What is the root of it? Most often, it’s because performing their duties doesn’t earn them a salary; it feels like working for free. If there were rewards, it might be acceptable for them, but they do not know whether they will get them or not. Therefore, people feel that performing duties is not worthwhile, equating it to working for nothing, so they often become negative and resistant when it comes to performing duties. Is this not the case? Frankly speaking, these people are unwilling to perform duties” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God’s words I saw that those who don’t practice the truth and are considerate of the flesh only think about their own physical interests. They don’t take their duties as responsibilities. When they do more, they feel like they’re losing out, so they complain and resist. This isn’t doing their duties. Compared with myself, because the sisters

partnered with me were new and couldn't independently do their duties, and they needed more of my fellowship and assistance, I was therefore full of complaints, thinking they were wasting my rest time. I flared up and poured forth hotheadedness, unwilling to talk to them or care about the work they were responsible for. I never considered the church work as my duty or thought about how to help the sisters quickly take up their responsibilities to prevent losses in church work. I was not even willing to talk more or spend more time and energy. How could my behavior be considered performing my duties faithfully? A person with conscience and reason doesn't consider personal interests in any environment. They remain loyal to God and do their duties well no matter how much they suffer and are tired. However, I always thought about indulging in physical comfort and convenience. When things got a little tough, I felt aggrieved and thought that I had lost out, and I wanted to escape from this environment. All of this was caused by my corrupt dispositions of coveting the flesh and of being selfish and vile. I lived within my corrupt disposition, which greatly hurt the sisters partnered with me. They would watch my expression every day before speaking. Sometimes, they clearly had opinions, but they were afraid of saying something wrong, knowing I might react angrily. As a result, they couldn't fully fulfill their duties as they originally could have. How could this be considered doing my duty? It was practically doing evil and causing disruption! Now that I think about it, I was truly ugly in my behavior.

Later on, I sought why I always coveted comfort and considered my own physical interests. I read God's words that said: **“Until people have experienced God's work and understood the truth, it is Satan's nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong feelings?**

Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within man. So what is Satan's poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, 'How should people live? What should people live for?' people will answer, 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's philosophy and logic have become people's lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind's satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind's existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by this venom of Satan, right up to the present day" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). From God's words, I saw that I had been living by Satan's poison of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Everything I did was for myself, thinking that anyone who didn't look out for themselves was foolish. Therefore, in doing my duty, all my thoughts and actions were motivated by self-interest. Ever since He Li left, I hoped to have someone share the workload soon to lighten my burden, so that I could suffer less and feel less tired. Seeing Zhao Xin slow to pick up the work and not able to help much, I felt disdainful and wanted another partner. But as a leader, Liu Wen didn't grasp the principles well, and her work often needed revisions. I poured forth hotheadedness and

flared up at them, feeling that not only did they not help share the workload, but they also required me to spend more effort on fellowshiping with them. This left me with even less time to rest, and I felt very resentful toward them. When they encountered difficulties in their work, I didn't want to bother getting involved, leading to unresolved issues and delays in work. If I had been willing to sacrifice more and patiently help them, although it would have tired me out physically, if we had collaborated, then the church's work could have progressed smoothly. But I only considered my own physical interests. Living by Satan's poison of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," I became increasingly selfish, vile, and devoid of humanity, even causing delays in the work. If I didn't change, I'd ultimately be spurned and eliminated by God! I came before God and prayed, "God! Lately I have been living by Satan's poison of 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,' and it's been making me unspeakably miserable. When I'm not blaming others, I'm blaming God. I don't want to keep living like this. Please lead me to break free from the bondage of satanic poisons."

Later, I pondered: How should I treat people according to principles? I thought of these words of God: **"First of all, you must understand the truth. Once you understand the truth, it will be easy for you to understand God's intentions, and you will know the principles by which God requires people to treat others. You will know how to treat people, and you will be able to treat them in accordance with God's intentions. If you do not understand the truth, you will certainly not be able to understand God's intentions, and you will not treat others in a principled way. How you are to treat others is clearly shown or hinted at in God's words; the attitude with which God treats humanity is the attitude people should adopt in their treatment of one another. How**

does God treat each and every person? Some people are of immature stature; or are young; or have believed in God for only a short time; or are not bad by nature essence, not malicious, but are just a bit ignorant or lacking in caliber. Or they are subject to too many constraints, and are yet to understand the truth, yet to have life entry, so it is difficult for them to keep from doing foolish things or committing ignorant acts. But God does not fixate on people's passing foolishness; He looks only at their hearts. If they are resolved to pursue the truth, they are then correct, and when this is their objective, then God is observing them, waiting for them, and giving them time and opportunities that allow them to enter. It is not the case that God will write them off over a single transgression. That is something people often do; God never treats people like that. If God does not treat people in that way, then why do people treat others in that way? Does this not show their corrupt disposition? This is precisely their corrupt disposition. You have to look at how God treats ignorant and foolish people, how He treats those with immature stature, how He treats the normal revelations of humanity's corrupt disposition, and how He treats those who are malicious. God treats different people in different ways, and He also has various ways of managing different people's myriad conditions. You must understand these truths. Once you have understood these truths, you will then know how to experience matters and treat people according to principles" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Events, and Things Nearby). From God's words, I saw that God has principles in treating people. He is tolerant and patient with those who are small in stature, giving them opportunities to grow. But I didn't consider the actual difficulties others faced and had too high expectations. Zhao Xin was older and new to this, so

it was normal for her to be unfamiliar with the work at first. Instead of understanding her difficulties and providing loving support, I demanded that she immediately shoulder the work since she was doing this duty. Liu Wen was slow-paced and tended to get confused when there was a lot of work, but she was steady and serious in doing her duties and could handle actual tasks. However, I didn't help the sisters quickly familiarize themselves with the work and had overly high expectations. When they couldn't meet these expectations, I showed them dissatisfaction, leading to them feeling constrained. Thinking about when I first did my duties as a leader, I knew nothing at the time. It was through the constant help of brothers and sisters that I grasped some principles. But then, I excessively demanded from my partnered sisters, making things difficult for them. I truly lacked humanity! Thinking about this, I felt very ashamed.

Later, during my seeking, I read these words of God: **“There must be principles to how brothers and sisters interact. Do not always focus on others’ faults, instead you must examine yourself frequently, and then proactively admit to other people what things you have done that caused interference or harm to them, and learn to open yourself up and fellowship. In this way, you can achieve mutual understanding. What’s more, no matter what befalls you, you should view things based on the words of God. If people are able to understand the truth principles and find a path of practice, they will become of one heart and mind, and the relationship between the brothers and sisters will be normal, they will not be as indifferent, cold, and cruel as the nonbelievers, and they will shed their mentality of mutual suspicion and wariness. The brothers and sisters will become more intimate with each other; they will be able to support and love each other; there will be goodwill in their hearts, and they will be capable of tolerance and compassion toward each**

other, and they will support and help one another, instead of alienating each other, being envious of each other, measuring themselves against one another, and secretly competing and being defiant toward each other. ... When people live by their corrupt dispositions, it is very hard for them to be at peace before God, and it is very difficult for them to practice the truth and live by God's words. To live before God, you must first learn how to reflect on and know yourself, and truly pray to God, and then you must learn how to get on with the brothers and sisters. You must be tolerant of each other, lenient with each other, and be able to see what others' strengths and merits are—you must learn to accept others' opinions and things that are right" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words clearly tell us that in our interactions with brothers and sisters, we shouldn't always focus on their shortcomings but should instead see their strengths and merits. We need to be tolerant of each other and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. Zhao Xin was better at fellowshiping the truth to resolve problems; sometimes when I couldn't see through to the problems of brothers and sisters, Zhao Xin could find relevant words of God to fellowship and resolve them. Although Liu Wen was slow-paced, she thought through problems carefully, doing her duties seriously and responsibly. When I had a lot of work, I tended to be perfunctory, but Liu Wen occasionally reminded me, which was also helpful and complementary to me. The three of us working together harmoniously and complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses would surely make our work progress. Later on, I opened up to my partnered sisters about my state and we pointed out each other's issues. Through fellowship, we found the path and direction of our partnership, and I felt particularly at ease in my heart.

Seeing that the environment arranged by God has been beneficial for the growth of my life, I feel especially grateful to God.

59. Growing Up Amidst Storms

By Mi Xue, China

One day in March 2013, a couple of sisters and I returned home after a gathering, and as we walked in the house, we saw it was a total disaster. We figured the police had probably searched the place, so we moved immediately. Right after moving, some people from that community came storming in with the police. The police corralled us into the living room and then went to ransack the place. When none of them were looking I managed to break a SIM card I had in my pocket. One of the police noticed and forced my hand open, and seeing the broken card, yelled angrily, “She may look young, but she knows a thing or two. Take her back for questioning.” He also had one of the female officers search me, and then they put us into a police car. I was feeling pretty scared, so I prayed to God, “God, I don’t know where they’re taking me or how they’ll torture me. Please guide me and give me faith. No matter how much I suffer, I won’t be a Judas. I won’t betray You.” I gradually calmed down after praying.

The police took me into an interrogation room at the station and ordered me to lift my arms and stand in a squatting position. After a few minutes my arms were giving out, my legs were shaking and my chest felt tight and I collapsed to the ground. Then the police put me on a tiger chair and strapped my feet really tightly to the chair legs. A bit later a chubby criminal policewoman brought some documents into the room and said to me, “We’re carrying out a major nationwide arrest operation, doing a sweep of you Almighty God believers. We have all of your leaders and we’ve dismantled your church. What use is it to hold out on us? Just talk and then you can go.” Hearing this, I figured it was one of Satan’s tricks, and she was just trying to get me to be a Judas. I couldn’t fall for it. Even if lots of

brothers and sisters had been arrested, the work of God can't be dismantled by them so handily. I retorted, "Almighty God says: **'We trust that no country or power can stand in the way of what God wishes to achieve. Those who obstruct God's work, resist the word of God and disturb and impair the plan of God shall ultimately be punished by God'**" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). At this, she just harrumphed, shook her head and then walked out. Then another officer started questioning me, "When did you become religious? How long have you been in this area? Who have you been in contact with? Where have you been staying?" When I didn't say a word, he threatened me, "If you don't talk, we'll just beat you to death and bury your corpse up in the mountains." It occurred to me that those people slaughter people as if they were chickens, that they don't care at all about human life. I wondered if they really would beat me to death. Feeling really afraid, I said a silent prayer to God and then thought of these words from Him: **"Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). I knew it was true that God is my shield and He rules over all. My body and soul were in His hands, so it wasn't up to the police whether I would be beaten to death. This thought gave me faith and strength. Afterward, the police kept interrogating me nonstop, but I didn't tell them anything.

Early morning on the third day, one of them said, "Ready to talk yet?" I didn't say a word. Furious, he grabbed me by the collar and smacked me in the face, leaving my ears ringing and my face burning. Then when I wasn't paying attention, he rolled up some papers into a tube and hit me in the eyes, which was so painful that it felt like they were about to fall off. I closed my eyes instinctively. An officer said in anger, "Open your eyes!" I

slowly opened up my eyes but couldn't see anything. I could start seeing some things only after 10 minutes. My eyes hurt a lot and I just wanted to close them, so thinking I was sleepy, the police hit my head with a water bottle and then sometimes kicked my head and my arms with their feet. And to keep me awake, they secured my hair and hands with Velcro to the back of the tiger chair. I had to keep holding my head up. Trying to relieve my pain, I just struggled to lean back against the tiger chair. I was dizzy, my body ached, and I had palpitations and felt miserable. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to hold on, so I kept crying out to God, "God, please give me the resolve to suffer, please give me faith. I'll never bow to Satan!" In my pain, I thought of some of God's words: **"The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, people are subjected to humiliation and oppression because of their belief in God, and these words are fulfilled in you, this group of people, as a result. Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Through God's words, I saw that the Communist Party is God's enemy, that they hate God and the truth. They want to do everything to keep us from believing in God, using various cruel torture methods to get us to betray Him. I was born in the great red dragon's country, so this is something I have to suffer. But through the Communist Party's oppression, I saw how evil it is, how it's essentially opposed to God. I wanted even more to reject Satan and turn to God, to stand firm in my witness by faith, to shame Satan and see it defeated. Having that chance to stand witness for God was His blessing, and was a special favor. Understanding this gave me faith and it didn't feel so hard for me.

They started questioning me again after that, and when I stayed quiet, they threatened me, “The sooner you talk, the easier it’ll be. We’ll give you five minutes.” Then they put a timer in front of me, and as I saw the time go by, each minute, each second, I prayed to God nonstop, “God, I don’t know what these demons are going to do to me. Please protect me. I won’t sell out my brothers and sisters no matter what.” Five minutes passed and seeing I wouldn’t talk, one of them handcuffed my hands behind my back, grabbed me by the collar and got really close to my face, then asked me viciously who the church leader was and who I’d been in contact with. I still stayed silent, so he lit a cigarette, blew the smoke in my face over and over again. The smoke made me want to vomit, and tears were rolling down my face. Then he smacked me in the face really hard and hit my right ear, deafening me. Seeing I still wouldn’t talk, his eyes went wide with rage and he squeezed my neck with both hands, saying, “You gonna talk or what? If you don’t, I’ll strangle you. You’re never gonna forget me, you’ll have nightmares about me hitting you every night.” He choked me to the point that I couldn’t get a good breath, and I felt like I was about to take my last. I told him that I knew nothing even if he strangled me. Then a tall officer came in and gestured to the one choking me that there were security cameras so he should take me into the corner to beat me. I finally managed to get a breath. He dragged me out of the tiger chair, and hauled on my handcuffs, pushing me into a corner, then slammed my head into the wall. He kept doing that so many times, I lost count, and the last time he slammed it right into a plaque hanging on the wall. It felt like my head had been left with a dent from the beating, and I just fell to the floor with a thud. The world felt like it was spinning, like my head was about to explode, and my heart was torn to shreds. I couldn’t open my eyes and felt like I was suffocating. It was incredibly painful. I prayed to God, “God, please take

my breath from me so that I don't have to suffer this torment any longer." After some time passed I was barely able to open my eyes, and I wondered, "Why aren't I dead?" Then I realized that I shouldn't have been asking God to take my breath away, that it was an unreasonable request. He wanted me to continue living, to stand firm in my witness and shame Satan. But I was hoping to die to escape that suffering. That wasn't bearing witness. I felt kind of guilty when that occurred to me. Just then I heard a cop yelling, "Get up! Get up!" He kicked me when I didn't respond and said, "You playing dead?" I said a silent prayer, "God, these demons are torturing me so that I'll betray You. Please give me faith. I'll stand firm in my witness even if it costs me my life." One of them grabbed my clothing at the shoulders and hauled me partway up, then let me fall heavily back onto the floor. My hands and my back were really hurting from being handcuffed all that time, so I curled up in a ball on the floor to try to alleviate the pain a bit. An officer pulled me up and set me up against the wall, making me stand up straight, and kicked me in the left thigh before I had a chance to react. I doubled over with the pain and he barked at me, "Stand up!" But everything was hurting so much that there was no way I could stand. Then he kicked me in the waist, knocking the breath out of me for a moment. It felt like I was being stabbed. Another one dragged me back into the corner and smacked me across the face, leaving the corners of my mouth bleeding. Then he lit a cigarette and said, "If you keep quiet I'll burn your face with this cigarette, you'll be disfigured." Then he put it really close to my face. Feeling the heat from the cigarette, I got really scared and thought, "If he does burn me, it'll leave terrible scars and I'll be talked about and mocked everywhere I go." The thought of people pointing at me and talking about me was awful. Then I remembered these words from God: **"The good soldiers of the kingdom are not trained to be a group of people who can**

only talk about reality or boast; rather, they are trained to live out God's words at all times, to remain unyielding no matter what setbacks they face, and to live constantly in accordance with God's words and not to return to the world. This is the reality of which God speaks; this is God's requirement of man" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

Only Putting the Truth Into Practice Is Possessing Reality). From God's words, I understood that for a true believer, no matter what happens, they're able to stay strong in their faith in God without ever yielding to forces of darkness, without betraying God. The police wanted to threaten me with disfigurement so I'd betray God, and I couldn't fall for it. On top of that, even if I was disfigured, if I wasn't a Judas but stood firm in my witness, I could gain God's approval and be at peace within my heart. If I betrayed God to protect myself, I'd be dragging out an ignoble existence and my conscience would never be at peace. That would be unbearable. I thought of a part of a church hymn: **"With God's exhortations in my heart, I will never bend the knee to Satan. Though our heads may roll and our blood may spill, the backbones of God's people cannot be bent. I will bear resounding testimony for God, and humiliate devils and Satan"**

(Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, I Wish to See the Day of God's Glory). I felt a surge of faith and the courage to face the officers' torture. I closed my eyes and silently prayed, "God! No matter how they torture me, even if they do burn my face, I'll stand firm in my witness. Please give me faith and the resolve to suffer." Then I gritted my teeth and clenched my hands. Taking this for fear, the police started laughing maniacally. I opened my eyes and glared at him, and he said with a cold smile, "I've changed my mind. I'm going to burn your tongue, and burn it so you can't even talk." While saying this he tried to pry my mouth open, but he couldn't no matter how hard he tried. Furious, he grabbed my shoulders and stomped on my feet, then jumped up

and brought his feet down and grinded them back and forth on my feet. Then he grabbed the handcuffs and yanked them back and forth, leaving me on my tiptoes. My wrists were in agony and my arms felt like they were going to snap off. He said mockingly, “Isn’t your god almighty? Have him come save you!” I prayed to God, calling out to Him nonstop, and was filled with hatred for those demons.

Once he’d worn himself out, he leaned against the table smoking. I wondered what other methods of torture they were going to use on me and if I’d end up dead. If so, I hoped it would be quick, because that living hell they were putting me in then was unbearable. I didn’t know when it would all end. The more I thought about it, the more afraid I felt, and I thought, “I can never sell out the church leaders or brothers and sisters, so maybe I can just tell them about how I became a believer and get this over with, so they may stop beating me.” Then I thought, “My parents are believers. If I do tell them, they’ll be implicated and some brothers and sisters will be, too. That would make me a Judas and God would punish me.” Then I remembered this hymn of God’s words: **“Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free. If man harbors timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God. Satan is trying in every way possible to send us its thoughts. We should at every moment pray for God to illuminate and enlighten us, at every moment rely on God to purge Satan’s poison from within us, practice within our spirit at every moment how to come close to God, and let God have dominion over our whole being”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). Through God’s words, I realized that thinking about telling them how I came to

believe in God out of cowardice was giving in to Satan's tricks. I saw that my faith in God really was lacking, that I lacked the resolve to endure suffering. I'd made it up to that point, not because of my stature, but because God's words had been guiding me step by step. At that point I really needed to lean on God and have faith, and no matter how they tortured me, I could never betray God. I said a prayer in my heart, "Oh God, I'm willing to put my life in Your hands and I'll accept Your arrangements. I won't be a Judas even if they torture me to death." Then to my surprise, the cops' boss called them away. I silently gave thanks to God.

A little while later an officer came to the doorway and took my photo, and said, "I'm going to put your photo online and make you a 'celebrity,' so all your friends, relatives, and everyone will see what you look like now, and see that you believers are lunatics." I wasn't scared at all by that, and responded, "Aren't you the ones who made me look like this? Putting that photo online will only let everyone see the truth about how you persecute Christians." A female officer said, "Well, I'm convinced. I really don't know what that god of yours is like or where all your strength comes from. After all this you still insist on keeping your belief. I never imagined someone so young could be so tough." I gave thanks to God within my heart when I heard her say this. Then I thought of these words of God: **"God's life force can prevail over any power; moreover, it exceeds any power. His life is eternal, His power extraordinary, and His life force cannot be overwhelmed by any created being or enemy force"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). All those days they'd been ravaging me, torturing me, I had felt cowardice and weakness, and even wanted to escape it with death, but God was with me, protecting me, and it was God's words giving me faith and

strength, leading me to overcome all of that brutal torture. I gave heartfelt thanks to God.

When an officer took me to the bathroom a little later, she said to me, “They’re going to question you again soon, and you should just talk. Otherwise you’ll be put in prison for years, and you’ll come out a cripple after a stint in there. Do you know the way prisoners are treated? The women beat up other women, and they’ll cudgel you between the legs with wooden rods. If they get their hands on you, your life will be ruined.” Hearing her say this filled me with both hatred and fright, and at the prospect of becoming disabled in my 20s, I really didn’t know how I could get by after that. As an only child, my parents would have no one to count on if I were disabled. Then I remembered these words from God: **“Abraham offered up Isaac—what have you offered up? Job offered up everything—what have you offered up? So many people have given their lives, laid down their heads, shed their blood in order to seek the true way. Have you paid that price?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). Abraham could offer up his only son, and when Job was tested, losing everything he had and with boils all over his body, his friends laughed at him and his wife mocked him, but he never complained about God. He stood firm in his witness. Job and Abraham had true belief in God and they gave resounding testimony through trials. I needed to follow their example and stand witness and humiliate Satan no matter how much I suffered. I said this silent prayer to God, “God, I believe that absolutely all things are under Your sovereignty, so whether I become disabled is in Your hands. No matter what happens to me or how much I suffer, I’m willing to stand firm in my witness and satisfy You.” So I said to the officer, “That would be unconscionable. My conscience would never find peace if I sold out my brothers and sisters.

Even if I am sentenced, I will never do something against my conscience.” Hearing this, she took me back to the interrogation room without a word.

Early morning on April 1, the police came to question me again, but I still wouldn’t say anything. Around 2 p.m. that afternoon, they put me in a paddy wagon to take me to a brainwashing base. I sang this hymn of God’s words **“One Should Hold Fast to Their Sincerity for God”** secretly in my heart the whole way there: **“If people do not have any confidence, it is not easy for them to continue down this path. Everyone can now see that God’s work does not conform in the slightest with people’s notions and imaginings. God has done so much work and spoken so many words, and though people may acknowledge that they are the truth, notions about God are still liable to arise in them. If people wish to understand the truth and gain it, they must have the confidence and willpower to be able to stand by what they have already seen and what they have gained from their experiences. No matter what God does in people, they must uphold what they themselves possess, be sincere in front of God, and remain devoted to Him to the very end. This is mankind’s duty. People must uphold that which they should do”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). I already knew that having belief would mean being oppressed and having to suffer, and I’d resolved to stand firm in my witness and satisfy God no matter what kind of oppression or suffering I faced, but when I really faced it I realized that standing firm in my witness wasn’t as simple as I’d thought. It wasn’t just being enthusiastic, but it required having faith and the resolve to suffer. God was putting me through this brutal environment as a trial to perfect my faith, to cleanse and save me. I believed that God would guide me no matter what happened. As I sang the hymn my faith grew, and I knew no matter

how they tortured me, I had to lean on God to go through it and follow Him until the very end.

When we got to the brainwashing base, the police assigned two officers to keep watch over me 24 hours a day, to ask me questions about the church and brainwash me, and to get me to write something reneging my faith. The third morning they said they were going to show me a video they'd filmed in my hometown. At this my heart leaped into my throat and I wondered if they'd searched my home, if my parents were in trouble. I was worried that some brothers and sisters from the church there had been affected. I got more and more afraid. I couldn't stop fidgeting in my chair and felt like my limbs went numb. I prayed to God in my heart. In the video, my dad looked kind of yellow and swollen and he said a few things to me, subtly encouraging me to lean on God and stand firm in my witness. Hearing this, the tears just poured down my face and I felt awful. I also realized that the police were trying to play on my emotional attachment to get me to betray God and I despised the Communist Party with everything I had. I thought of something God said: **"Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The Communist Party gives lip service to religious freedom, but in reality, it madly arrests and persecutes Christians, and brutally tortures them, sentencing them on groundless charges. Countless Christians are forced to stay on the run, unable to see their parents or raise their children. All of that is perpetrated by the Communist Party. The Party is the chief culprit in ripping apart Christian homes. The officers stood off to the side and smiled sinisterly when they saw me crying, and thought I was sure to talk after that. But when I still kept my mouth shut, they hit the table and cursed me out, then turned around and left angrily.

A couple of officers came back to interrogate me again a month later and showed me photos, telling me to identify brothers and sisters. One said to me, “If you don’t admit to anything, you’ll be punished for other people’s crimes, and I’ll see how much we can get you. You’ll end up with 8 or 10 years, then we’ll see how tough you are!” Another one said, trying to tempt me, “Just go along with us and write the statement that you’ve given up your religion and we’ll do whatever you want.” I didn’t budge, so he tried to lure me again, “I know your parents don’t have any other kids, and they worked so hard to raise you. You may not think anything of getting a long sentence now, but you’re going to be miserable when that day actually comes and it’ll be too late for regrets. You have two choices: 1. Give up your religion and deny Almighty God and we’ll take you straight back home. 2. Insist on keeping your faith and go to prison. It’s all up to you to choose. You’d better give it some careful thought.” I was feeling kind of conflicted. If I wrote that statement of reneging my faith, that would be a betrayal of God, but if I chose my faith, I’d go to prison. Would I ever see my parents again? If I went to prison, people would definitely judge my parents, and their nonbelieving relatives and friends would attack them. It would be really hard on them. In the video my dad’s face looked yellow and swollen. Was he having health problems? This thought made me more and more miserable and I was really struggling, so I prayed, “God, I can’t betray You but I can’t let go of my parents. God, what should I do?” These words from God occurred to me just then: **“No matter who runs away, you cannot. Other people do not believe, but you must. Other people abandon God, but you must uphold God and bear witness to Him. Others slander God, but you cannot. ... You should repay His love, and you must have a conscience, because God is innocent”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). **“You**

must have a conscience,” these words kept ringing in my ears. Over my years of faith, I’d enjoyed so much of God’s grace. I’d also learned some truths, and knew what kind of person I should be. I’d gained so much from God. Betraying Him would be an unconscionable thing to do. But having to choose between God on one side and my parents on the other was agonizing. It was a particularly fierce battle within my heart. I silently said a prayer, asking God to guide me and give me faith. These words of God came to mind after my prayer: **“Are there not many among you who have seesawed between right and wrong? In contests between positive and negative, black and white, you are surely aware of the choices that you have made between family and God, children and God, peace and disruption, riches and poverty, status and ordinariness, being supported and being cast aside, and so on. Between a peaceful family and a broken one, you chose the former, and you did so without any hesitation; between riches and duty, you again chose the former, even lacking the will to return to shore; between luxury and poverty, you chose the former; when choosing between your sons, daughters, wives and husbands, and Me, you chose the former; and between notion and truth, you once again chose the former. Faced with all manner of your evil deeds, I have simply lost faith in you. It simply astounds Me that your hearts are so resistant to being softened. ... If you were asked to choose again, what then would be your position? Would it still be the former? Would you still bring Me disappointment and wretched sorrow? Would your hearts still possess the sole modicum of warmth? Would you still be unaware of what to do to comfort My heart? At this moment, what do you choose?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Whom Are You Loyal?). I felt like God was right by my side, waiting for my answer. I knew I could not betray God just to satisfy my human affections

and maintain family harmony. God is almighty, and my parents' health and their lives were in God's hands. Constantly worrying about them just showed that I was lacking faith in God. We may not be able to see each other, but I knew that as long as we leaned on God, He would guide us. This thought restored my faith and I felt ready to rebel against my flesh to satisfy God. I said a prayer, "Oh God, I'm willing to put my parents in Your hands and submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements." So then I clenched my fists, stood up, and said, "I've made my decision, and I'm going with Almighty God. He is the one true God who created the heavens, the earth, and everything, and He is the Lord Jesus returned. I will never deny God." I felt entirely at peace once I'd said this. If it hadn't been for the guidance of God's words, I really would have struggled to triumph over Satan's temptation. The officer showed his ferociousness as soon as he saw how resolute I was. He slammed a thick stack of papers onto the table and smacked me hard in the face, then screamed at me, "You're a lost cause! You think we won't know anything just because you don't talk? Let me make it clear for you—we'd already been following you guys for three months, so you think we don't know all about you? We just want to see if you're going to have a good attitude, so you think about it." I said, "I won't deny God, I won't betray Him even if it means prison time." They took me to a municipal detention house after that.

In there, I often got high fevers and my feet and hands swelled up, and they made me sit cross-legged for two hours every day. I'd been kicked in the waist during interrogation, doing damage to my kidney, so my waist hurt so much I couldn't sit up straight. It was really hard to make it till I could go to sleep every day, and yet I was often woken up to take on a night shift. After a couple of weeks, I started having difficulties urinating, my stomach was bloated and painful, and my waist hurt, too. And then every

day around 6 or 7 p.m. my fever would spike and my face would flush. I was examined by a doctor, who said I had a cyst in my left kidney that was nearly an inch wide, and it was inflamed. When it really hurt, I would pray to God and draw near to Him, and sing hymns in praise of Him, and then I would unknowingly forget about the pain. Once I'd been in the detention house for 27 days, they released me on bail pending trial, and I naively thought I could really go home. But to my surprise, my hometown police and local government officials took me straight to another brainwashing base for 48 days of conversion and brainwashing, and then they took me to the local police station to register. The police chief called me into his office and said, "You're on bail pending trial now, so your case is pending. For one year, you are not allowed to leave the city limits, and even if you have errands to run in a nearby area, you still have to come here first to report to us and request permission, and you need to be ready to report to us at a moment's notice." Even though I was back home, I still didn't have any freedom, and someone was following me every time I went into the city. After a few months of this, I had no choice but to leave my home to do my duty. The police sent the party secretary of our village to look for me at home and inquire about my religious status, and told my family that if I kept practicing my faith they'd arrest me again, and that I had to report to the police station. I was furious when I heard about this. And I thought, "I will believe in God no matter what, and not only that, but I'm going to forsake everything to preach the gospel and bear witness to God! I'll definitely continue forward by relying on God." Thanks be to God!

60. There Is No Rank or Distinction Among Duties

By Li Min, China

In February 2019, I was dismissed from my leadership duty because I pursued reputation and status instead of doing real work. The day after my dismissal, the husband of the sister from my host family was injured in an accident, and she needed to return home to take care of him. The supervisor arranged for me to temporarily take over her hosting duties. I thought to myself, “If the brothers and sisters find out that after my dismissal, I’m now just doing hosting duties, cooking, running errands, and delivering messages, what will they think of me? They’d be sure to look down on me. How can I save face?” But as I thought of this duty as only temporary, I agreed to do it for the time being. However, when no suitable person was found to replace me after several weeks, the supervisor fellowshiped with me and asked me to continue doing hosting duties. When I heard this, my heart churned, as I thought, “Why arrange things this way? If the brothers and sisters who know me find out that I will be doing hosting duties long-term, they’ll definitely look down on me. Won’t they say I’m not someone who pursues the truth, and that I’m good for nothing but manual labor and hosting duties? How will I be able to save face? Moreover, before I was dismissed, I cooperated with a few sisters to do our duties. And now, here I am, just cooking. What a difference! It’s utterly humiliating!” Thinking of this, I became unwilling to do hosting duties. The supervisor saw that I was in a bad state and fellowshiped her own experience of being dismissed. I realized that every duty is out of God’s sovereignty and arrangements, so I submitted. But that night, I tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep. I thought to myself, “Since I found God, most of my duties have been as a

leader or worker. I never thought I'd end up just doing odd jobs and cooking. What will the brothers and sisters who know me think of me if they find out? That would be utterly humiliating!" I saw the sisters discussing work together, and I remembered that when I was a leader, I used to work with them on such discussions. But now, here I was, spending my days washing dishes, cooking, and even cleaning. What a difference! I was living in a wrong state, and the more I thought about it, the more painful it became. Afterward, whenever I did these dirty jobs, I was afraid that the sisters would look down on me, so I'd rush to do them when they weren't around. I felt that doing such dirty work was humiliating. My heart was filled with pain and suffering, and tears streamed down my face involuntarily.

One day, the supervisor asked me to take out the trash when I went out. When I heard this, I felt very resistant, thinking, "What do you take me for? We used to cooperate together, but now you're ordering me around like this." The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. I was very upset inside. I came before God and prayed, asking God to enlighten and guide me to know myself and understand His intentions. Later, I read these words of God's words: **"What is the attitude you should have toward your duty, that can be called correct and in line with the intentions of God? First, you cannot analyze who it is arranged by, which level of leadership it is assigned by—you should accept it from God. You cannot analyze this, you should accept it from God. This is a condition. Furthermore, whatever your duty, do not discriminate between high and low. Suppose you say, 'Though this task is a commission from God and the work of God's house, if I do it, people might look down on me. Others get to do work that lets them stand out. I've been given this task, which doesn't let me stand out but makes me exert myself behind the scenes,**

it's unfair! I will not do this duty. My duty has to be one that makes me stand out in front of others and allows me to make a name for myself—and even if I don't make a name for myself or stand out, I still have to benefit from it and feel physically at ease.' Is this an acceptable attitude? Being picky is not accepting things from God; it is making choices according to your own preferences. This is not accepting your duty; it is a refusal of your duty, a manifestation of your rebelliousness against God. Such pickiness is adulterated with your individual preferences and desires. When you give consideration to your own benefit, your reputation, and so on, your attitude toward your duty is not submissive. What attitude should you have toward your duty? First, you must not analyze it, trying to ascertain who it was that assigned it to you; instead, you should accept it from God, as a duty entrusted to you by God, and you should obey the orchestration and arrangements of God, and accept your duty from God. Second, do not discriminate between high and low, and do not concern yourself with its nature, whether it lets you stand out or not, whether it is done in public view or behind the scenes. Do not consider these things. There is also another attitude: submission and active cooperation” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **“Being able to endure hardship in performing one's duty is not an easy task. It is also not easy to perform a particular kind of work well. It is certain that the truth of God's words is at work within people who can do these things. It is not that they were born without fear of hardship and fatigue. Where could such a person be found? These people all have some motivation, and they have some of the truth of God's words as their foundation. When they take up their duties, their views and standpoints change—performing their duties becomes easier and**

enduring some fleshly hardship and fatigue begins to feel insignificant to them. Those who do not understand the truth and whose views on things haven't changed live according to human ideas, notions, selfish desires, and personal preferences, so they are reluctant and unwilling to perform their duties. For example, when it comes to doing dirty and tiring work, some people say, 'I will obey the arrangements of God's house. Whatever duty the church arranges for me, I will perform it, regardless of whether it is dirty or tiring, whether it is impressive or unremarkable. I have no demands, and I will accept it as my duty. This is the commission that God has entrusted to me, and a little dirt and fatigue are the hardships that I should endure.' As a result, when they are engaged in their work, they don't feel they are enduring any hardship at all. While others may find it dirty and tiring, they find it easy, because their hearts are calm and undisturbed. They are doing it for God, so they don't feel that it is difficult. Some people consider doing dirty, tiring, or unremarkable work an insult to their status and character. They perceive it as others not respecting them, bullying them, or looking down on them. As a result, even when faced with the same tasks and workload, they find it strenuous. Whatever they do, they carry a sense of resentment in their hearts, and feel that things are not the way they want them to be or that they are unsatisfactory. Inside, they are full of negativity and resistance. Why are they negative and resistant? What is the root of it? Most often, it's because performing their duties doesn't earn them a salary; it feels like working for free. If there were rewards, it might be acceptable for them, but they do not know whether they will get them or not. Therefore, people feel that performing duties is not worthwhile, equating it to working for nothing, so they often become negative and resistant when it comes

to performing duties. Is this not the case? Frankly speaking, these people are unwilling to perform duties” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God exposes that when some people receive some duties, they can't accept them from God and instead choose their duties based on their own preferences. They accept duties that allow them to stand out, but resist and reject those that don't bring them recognition. They have no attitude of submission in their duties. What God exposed was precisely my state. I believed that being a leader came with the right to speak, and that wherever I went, I would be looked up to by my brothers and sisters, so I was willing to cooperate in that duty. However, I felt that hosting duty was among the lowest, and that it just consisted of manual labor, so I couldn't bring myself to submit to it. I felt that this duty humiliated me, and I felt wronged. When the supervisor asked me to clean the yard and take out the trash, I found it hard to accept. I felt she was disrespecting me by ordering me around, and it upset me. I used status levels as a measure of whether a person had dignity. I thought that doing the duty of a leader was like being a company's boss or manager, and that it came with status and position, and that these people were admired wherever they went, and I envied such people. When I heard about hosting duties, it felt to me like just doing chores and cooking, similar to menial work, and I felt that people who did this duty were lowly and looked down upon wherever they went. I found this duty humiliating. I'd believed in God for so many years, yet I still held the same views as nonbelievers. These views of mine were truly absurd! In God's house, everyone is equal in their duties. There's no distinction in duties in terms of high or low, noble or menial, big or small. Whether it's the duty of leadership or hosting, they all come from God. They just serve different functions, and as created beings, we should accept and submit to them. But in my duties, I only considered my own interests and pride. I

didn't treat my duties as a commission from God at all. Because hosting duty didn't allow me to stand out, I was resistant toward it. I had no sense of responsibility toward my duties and just did things perfunctorily. I saw that I was really selfish and despicable, and that I had no conscience or reason!

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been infected by society to a severe extent, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for worldly dealings, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly submit to God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the power of Satan, man does nothing but pursue pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud. Even when they hear the truth, those who live in darkness give no thought to putting it into practice, nor are they inclined to seek out God even if they have beheld His appearance. How could a mankind so depraved have any chance of salvation? How could a mankind so decadent live in the light?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). God's words exposed the root of why I couldn't submit to Him. From a young age, I'd been influenced by satanic poisons like "People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark" and "Man struggles upward; water flows downward"

and they had become the criteria by which I comported myself and behaved. I believed that people must live for their pride, and that being able to be looked up to no matter where they go was how a person can live with dignity. I also wanted to do work that would allow me to stand out and be admired by others, and I thought this was how to live with dignity and value. But to me, doing dirty or unrecognized work felt lowly and belittling, so I was unwilling to accept it. Before I found God, I lived by these views, always wanting to live better than others. I looked down on farmers and laborers who earned money through hard work, and I felt that running a clothing business was more respectable than physical labor, and could allow me to hold my head high in front of others, and even make my friends and relatives come to see me in a new light. After finding God, I still lived by these satanic poisons while doing my duties in the church. Doing the duty of leadership satisfied my vanity and pride and allowed me to be admired by my brothers and sisters, and that made me happy. I was even willing to endure some hardship and exhaustion for it. But after doing the duty of leadership, I kept seeking admiration from others, always trying to protect my pride and status. I didn't do any real work, and so I was dismissed. When I was given a duty again, I didn't know to cherish it. Not only did I not reflect on the reasons for my failure, but I still kept thinking about my pride and status. I thought that doing hosting duties was shameful, and even when I reluctantly accepted it, I did it in a resistant and perfunctory way. I had no conscience or reason at all. I placed my pride and status above all else, and even when I knew no one else could take on hosting duties, I still wanted to refuse and shirk them. I didn't consider the church's interests at all, nor did I think about my duties and responsibilities. I was utterly selfish! If I didn't repent, I'd end up despised and eliminated by God. I realized the harmful consequences of pursuing pride and status, and I

became willing to repent to God, to let go of my pride and status, and to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements by doing these hosting duties well.

After that, I no longer felt so resistant when doing hosting duties. Sometimes, I was even able to open up and fellowship with the sisters, and I felt much freer and more liberated. I saw that my sisters didn't look down on me because I was doing hosting duties, and I truly realized that in God's house, there's no distinction of high or low duties. The functions are simply different. Later, I read more of God's words: **"In God's house, whenever something is arranged for you to do, be it a hardship or tiring work, and whether you like it or not, it is your duty. If you can consider it a commission and responsibility that God has given you, you are then relevant to His work of saving man. And if what you do and the duty you perform are relevant to God's work of saving man, and you can earnestly and sincerely accept the commission God has given you, how will He regard you? He will regard you as a member of His family. Is that a blessing or a curse? (A blessing.) It is a great blessing"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **"What is your function as created beings? This relates to a person's practice and duty. You are a created being, and if God gave you the gift of song, and the house of God arranges for you to sing, then you are to sing well. If you have the gift of evangelism, and the house of God arranges for you to spread the gospel, then you should spread the gospel well. When God's chosen people elect you as a leader, you should take up the commission of leadership, and lead God's chosen people to eat and drink the words of God, fellowship on the truth, and enter into reality. In doing so, you will have performed your duty well. The commission God gives to man is extremely important and meaningful!**

So, how should you take up this commission and fulfill your function? This is one of the biggest issues you face, and you must make a choice. It can be said that this is a crucial moment which decides whether you can gain the truth and be perfected by God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Understanding the Truth Can One Know God’s Deeds). From God’s words, I found a path of practice, and I understood the position created beings should take before God, along with the proper reason we ought to possess. No matter what duty the church arranges, whether it’s hosting duty or any other duty, we should submit to God unconditionally. This is the proper reason we should have. No matter the size of the duty, if we can submit and treat it as a responsibility given by God, rely on God and do our best to cooperate we will make gains. For instance, some brothers and sisters may do less visible duties, but they don’t seek to stand out. They focus on seeking the truth and doing their duties according to principles, and they still make progress. If someone doesn’t pursue the truth or submit while doing their duty, then no matter how impressive their duty may seem, if they don’t gain the truth or experience a change in their disposition, they are still opposed to God, and they will ultimately be eliminated by God. Every duty in God’s house is important and indispensable. Just like how a machine can’t function with even a single screw missing. Hosting duties may seem insignificant, but without someone doing it, brothers and sisters wouldn’t have a quiet environment in which to gather and do their duties. Realizing this, I began to cherish my hosting duty from the bottom of my heart, and I became willing to cooperate properly.

From then on, whenever I had incorrect intentions in my duty, I consciously prayed to God to rebel against myself. After completing my duty each day, I would quiet myself, read God’s words, and write devotional notes. I had more time to be close to God. Gradually, my state

improved, and I came to feel that this duty was quite good. I truly experienced God's painstaking intentions, because whatever orchestrations and arrangements God makes are meant to cleanse and transform us. God doesn't show favoritism, and no matter what duty a person does, as long as they accept it from God and are willing to submit and pursue the truth, they will make gains.

Reflecting on this experience, I silently thanked God in my heart. God arranged this environment for me to do hosting duties, pruned me for my desire for pride and status, and corrected my fallacious views on how to approach my duty. This was something my life needed, and it was God's love. I also came to understand that duties aren't ranked in terms of importance or value, and that no matter what kind of duty we do, they are the function that created beings should carry out. We shouldn't do our duties based on personal preferences, nor should we be selective. We should submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, as this is what it means to have humanity and reason. The understanding and transformation I've gained in this have all come as a result of the guidance of God's words.

61. I Shouldn't Play Favorites for My Mother

By Xinyi, China

In 2012, I became responsible for the work of several churches. I learned that, during church elections, my mom was misled by the evil person Li Fang and attacked and belittled the newly elected church leader, saying he had no work ability, that he didn't understand the truth and was unsuitable to be a leader, and she did all she could to exalt and praise Li Fang as someone with the truth reality, who could forsake things and work hard, suffer hardships and pay a price, and in the end she voted the evil person Li Fang to be the leader. My mom also attacked and judged the watering deacon as someone without the work of the Holy Spirit and who couldn't do real work and should resign his position, which caused him to live in negativity and impacted the watering work. My mom didn't reflect at all on her own evil deeds, and when the church wanted to expel Li Fang, she did all she could to protect Li Fang, seeking justice for her, and even incited and misled brothers and sisters into being on Li Fang's side. She also said, "No matter how many elections we have, I'll still vote for Li Fang to be leader." She disturbed things so much that the election couldn't proceed normally and this caused church work to be severely impacted. Later, a leader dissected and exposed my mom's evil deeds but she didn't recognize her own evil deeds or repent at all. In accordance with her behavior, my mom was to be cleared out. When I learned that she was to be cleared out, I felt very upset. After coming to believe in God, my mom was persecuted and suffered greatly. She was closest to me and struggled a lot to raise me, so I sympathized with her to some extent and didn't want to face the fact of her being cleared out. I prayed to God and sought from Him many times, and under the enlightenment and guidance of God's words, I

came to have some discernment of her essence as an evil person and signed my name agreeing to her being cleared out of the church.

In May 2018, I was in charge of the church's cleansing work. I saw in the work arrangements issued by God's house that those who show true repentance after being cleared out can be considered for rejoining the church. I thought about how over the past few years my mom would occasionally mention her being cleared out of the church, saying that her nature was too arrogant, that she was stubborn, and that her being cleared out showed God's righteous disposition. One time, I asked her what her understanding was of her evil deeds at that time. She said that it was mainly down to having no discernment and being misled. She'd thought that Li Fang had believed in God for a long time and could forsake things, work hard, and suffer hardships, that she was made for the position of leader, and so had believed her own view to be right and not listened to any dissuasion. But when talking about the details of her evil deeds, she still made excuses and justifications for herself and professed her innocence as though there were justified reasons for what she did. So I brought together her issues and Li Fang's behavior and fellowshipped with her on the nature and consequences of the disturbances caused to work by protecting evil people, and guided her to reflect on and understand herself. My mom nodded and agreed and said that she had been Satan's lackey and had been a mouthpiece for Satan, that she had been an evil person. I was very happy to see this. My mom wasn't totally unaccepting of the truth, and she had some understanding. I also thought, "She's been eating and drinking God's words all these years, she's insisted on making offerings and giving to charity, and she has some discernment of Li Fang. After being cleared out, once while preaching the gospel, she was arrested by the police but never sold the church out and became a Judas. And when I was negative and weak, she

comforted and encouraged me. I have been unable to return home for the past few years due to being hunted by the police, and she has been helping me by looking after my child and supporting me in doing my duty.” Thinking these things, I wondered whether my mom was showing signs of repentance. She had been very upset after she got cleared out and hoped for a day when she could be accepted back into the church. Now I just so happened to be in charge of this work, so I had to make “every effort” to get my mom accepted back into the church. Then she would be able to live the church life with brothers and sisters, and when she found out that it was me who got her accepted again, she’d surely be over the moon.

I then wrote letters to the churches I was in charge of, asking the church leaders to investigate whether there were any people who sincerely repented and could be accepted after being expelled. One day, the church leaders sent me four letters of repentance written by evil people who’d been expelled and among them was my mom’s. I was overjoyed. I already knew about the other three people. They’d shown no signs of repentance after being expelled. In comparison, the possibility for my mom to be accepted back into the church was much higher. I thought that according to the church’s principles for readmitting people, the one being readmitted must be assessed by most brothers and sisters, and leaders and workers. It was nowhere near enough to just go by the person’s letter of repentance and the evaluation of church leaders. I immediately wrote letters to the church leaders, asking them to provide evaluations of my mom from people who knew her. But I was afraid that only asking them to provide evaluations of my mom would cause the brothers and sisters to accuse me of favoritism. To avoid arousing suspicion, I asked the leaders to provide evaluations of all four people, and told them the sooner the better. I thought also that my own evaluation would be key so I wrote a detailed account of my mom’s

“repentant” actions after she was cleared out, but just wrote a passing remark on the reasons why she was cleared out back then. I was afraid that if I wrote in too much detail, it would affect her being readmitted. Most importantly, I had to highlight her relatively good behavior after she was cleared out, and in this way, the chances of her being accepted back into the church would be higher. I then wrote to my mom, fellowshipping and dissecting her evil actions back then, guiding her to understand the root causes, and reminding her to grasp this opportunity and quickly repent. As I wrote to her, I felt some self-reproach: By secretly putting so much thought into getting my mom accepted back into the church, was I not acting on my feelings? But these were just passing thoughts, and I didn’t seek the truth or reflect on myself. While I was waiting for the letters, I was afraid of any mistakes that would affect my mom being readmitted, so every few days I wrote letters to the church leaders, urgently asking how they were getting on with collecting the evaluations.

One day, the upper-level leader wrote a letter pruning me, “Church leaders have recently focused their work on collecting readmission materials for a few expelled individuals and put all other work aside. These people who’ve shown no signs of repentance are not people who will be readmitted by the church and yet you’ve asked the churches to collect evaluations on them. You are disrupting and disturbing church work.” When I read this, I kept arguing my case in my mind, “Collecting evaluations for people who’ve shown no signs of repentance? Has the leader misunderstood? My mom has shown signs of repentance. How can the leader say none of these people have shown signs of repentance and prune me for disrupting and disturbing church work?” I felt constantly resistant and wouldn’t accept this at all. I was aware that my state was wrong, so I knelt and prayed to God, “Oh God! I can’t accept this pruning

from the leader today. I have no discernment of my mom and don't understand what true repentance is. Please enlighten and guide me to understand this truth." After praying, I felt a little calmer. Afterward, I read two passages of God's words: **"This 'evil way' does not refer to a handful of evil acts, but to the evil source from which people's behavior springs. 'Turning away from one's evil way' means that those in question will never commit these actions again. In other words, they will never again behave in this evil way; the method, source, motive, intent and principle of their actions have all changed; they will never again use those methods and principles to bring enjoyment and happiness to their hearts. The 'abandon' in 'abandon the violence in one's hands' means to lay down or to cast aside, to fully break with the past and to never turn back. When the people of Nineveh abandoned the violence in their hands, this proved and represented their true repentance. God observes people's outward appearances as well as their hearts. When God observed the true repentance in the hearts of the Ninevites without question and also observed that they had left their evil ways and abandoned the violence in their hands, He changed His heart"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). **"Regardless of how angry God had been with the Ninevites, as soon as they declared a fast and donned sackcloth and ashes, His heart began to soften and He began to change His mind. When He proclaimed to them that He would destroy their city—the moment prior to their confession and repentance for their sins—God was still angry with them. Once they had carried out a series of repentant acts, God's anger for the people of Nineveh gradually transformed into mercy and tolerance for them. There is nothing contradictory about the coinciding revelation of these two aspects of God's disposition in the same event. So, how should one understand**

and know this lack of contradiction? God expressed and revealed each of these two polar-opposite essences before and after the people of Nineveh repented, allowing people to see the realness and the unoffendableness of God's essence. God used His attitude to tell people the following: It is not that God does not tolerate people, or that He does not want to show mercy to them; rather, it is that they rarely truly repent to God, and it is rare that people truly turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. In other words, when God is angry with man, He hopes that man will be able to truly repent, and indeed He hopes to see man's true repentance, in which case He will then liberally continue to bestow His mercy and tolerance upon man. This is to say that man's evil conduct incurs God's wrath, whereas God's mercy and tolerance are bestowed upon those who listen to God and truly repent before Him, upon those who can turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. God's attitude was very clearly revealed in His treatment of the Ninevites: God's mercy and tolerance are not at all difficult to obtain, and what He requires is one's true repentance. As long as people turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands, God will change His heart and His attitude toward them" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). Contemplating God's words, I understood that the Ninevites had aroused God's wrath by doing all manner of evil deeds, and yet because they were able to leave their evil ways and utterly relinquish their evil acts—they didn't just speak their confession and repentance, or change their outward behavior, but rather they reflected on and understood their evil deeds, and the intention, source, and purpose of their actions changed—they achieved true repentance, and so they obtained God's mercy and tolerance. Those evil people and antichrists, however, just

exhibit some good behavior on the surface after being expelled, preaching the gospel or doing some good deeds, hoping to make amends for their past misdeeds. Although they admit to having done evil in words, as to what evil deeds they did specifically, what their intentions, aims, and motivations were for doing such things, and what nature controlled them, they never really understand or hate such root problems, and so they can't truly repent. If a suitable chance comes along, they'll continue to do evil and resist God, and people like this cannot obtain God's mercy and tolerance. Compared with my mom's behavior, she was cleared out by the church for doing much evil and stubbornly refusing to repent, which offended God's disposition. This was God's righteousness. But if she could've truly understood and repented of her past evil actions, focused on practicing the truth, and guaranteed to not do such evil things again, then perhaps there would've been some hope that she'd obtain God's mercy and tolerance. My mom, however, only admitted in words that she'd been misled by Li Fang and had disrupted and disturbed church life, and admitted that she was an evil person and Satan's lackey. Yet she had no understanding of how she'd argued on behalf of an evil person or of her evil deeds that had disrupted and disturbed the church election. When her evil deeds were exposed again, she still tried to argue on her own behalf using objective reasons and had no understanding of her own nature essence. This couldn't be called true repentance. When I saw how upset she was after she'd been cleared out, how she persisted in her faith and attending gatherings, how she didn't become a Judas when she was arrested, how she was always making offerings and giving to charity, and how she comforted and encouraged me when I felt negative and weak, I thought she was showing signs of repentance and wanted to get her accepted back into the church. I thought of these words of God: **"The standard by which humans judge other**

humans is based on their behavior; those whose conduct is good are righteous, while those whose conduct is abominable are evil. The standard by which God judges humans is based on whether their essence submits to Him or not; one who submits to God is a righteous person, while one who does not is an enemy and an evil person, regardless of whether this person's behavior is good or bad and regardless of whether their speech is correct or incorrect" (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). God judges whether someone is good or evil not on whether their external behavior is good or bad, but on their essence, their attitude toward the truth, and whether the intentions and motivations behind their actions are to practice the truth and submit to God. If someone hates the truth in essence, then no matter how good their external behavior is, they're still a God-resisting evil person. I saw that I was approaching people without principles. I thought that she truly repented just going by her having some good external behaviors, but I didn't know how to discern her essence and wasn't looking at her attitude toward the truth, and all I wanted was to get her accepted back into the church, which was totally without principle. My views on things were so absurd! I later reflected on myself: What corrupt disposition was constraining and binding me to act that way? With this question in mind, I continued searching for the answers in God's words.

During my devotionals, I read some of God's words: **"What are feelings, in essence? They are a kind of corrupt disposition. The manifestations of feelings can be described using several words: favoritism, unprincipled protection of others, maintenance of physical relationships, and partiality; these are what feelings are. What are the likely consequences of people's having feelings and living by them? Why does God most loathe people's feelings? Some people are always**

constrained by their feelings, they cannot put the truth into practice, and though they wish to submit to God, they cannot, so they feel tormented by their feelings. There are many people who understand the truth but cannot put it into practice; this, too, is because they are constrained by feelings” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Truth Reality?). **“God’s house asks you to do the work of cleansing the church, and there is one individual who has always been perfunctory in their duty, always looking for ways to slack off. According to principle, this person should be cleansed away, but you have a good relationship with them. So what kinds of thoughts and intentions will arise in you? How will you practice? (Acting according to my own preferences.) And what produces these preferences? Because this person has been good to you or has done things for you, you have a good impression of them, and so at this time you want to protect them, and to defend them. Is this not the effect of feelings? You feel emotional toward them, and so take the approach of ‘While the higher authorities have policies, the localities have their counter-measures.’ You’re double-dealing. On the one hand, you say to them, ‘You must try a little harder when you do things. Stop being perfunctory, you have to suffer a little hardship; this is our duty.’ On the other, you reply to the Above and say, ‘They have changed for the better, they are more effective now when they perform their duty.’ But what you’re actually thinking in your mind is, ‘This is because I worked on them. If I hadn’t, they’d still be like they were.’ In your mind, you’re always thinking, ‘They have been nice to me, they can’t be cleared out!’ What state is it when such things are in your intention? This is harming the work of the church by protecting personal emotional relationships. Does acting in this way accord with the truth principles? And is there submission to your doing**

this? (No.) There is no submission; there is resistance in your heart. In the things that happen to you and the work you are supposed to do, your own ideas contain subjective judgments, and here emotional factors are mixed in. You are doing things based on feelings, and yet still believe that you are acting impartially, that you are giving people the chance to repent, and that you are giving them loving assistance; thus you do as you wish, not as God says. Working in this way reduces the quality of the work, reduces effectiveness, and harms the church's work—which is all the outcome of acting according to feelings. If you do not examine yourself, will you be able to identify the problem here? You never will. You might know that it is wrong to act in this way, that this is a lack of submission, but you think it over and say to yourself, 'I must help them with love, and after they have been helped and they get better, there will be no need to clear them out. Does God not give people the chance to repent? God loves people, so I must help them with love, and I must do as God asks.' After thinking these things, you do things your own way. Afterward, your heart feels at ease; you feel that you are practicing the truth. During this process, did you practice according to the truth, or did you act according to your own preferences and intentions? Your actions were wholly according to your own preferences and intentions. Throughout the whole process, you used your so-called kindness and love, feelings, and philosophies for worldly dealings to smooth things over, and you tried to walk the fence. It seemed like you were helping this person with love, but in your heart you were actually constrained by feelings—and, fearing the Above would find out, you tried to win them over with compromise, so that no one was offended and the work got done—which is the same way that the nonbelievers try to walk the fence. In actuality, how does God

appraise this situation? He will classify you as one who does not submit to the truth, who often adopts a scrutinizing, analytical attitude toward the truth and God's requirements. What role does your intention play when you approach the truth and God's requirements using this method, and when you perform your duties with this attitude? It serves to protect your own interests, your own pride, and your interpersonal relations without any regard for God's demands, nor having any positive impact on your own duties or the church's work. Such a person is living entirely by philosophies for worldly dealings. Everything they say and do is to safeguard their own pride, feelings, and interpersonal relations, yet they have no genuine submission toward the truth and God, nor do they make any attempt to declare or own up to these problems. They feel not a shred of self-reproach and remain wholly ignorant as to the nature of the problems. If people lack God-fearing hearts, and if God has no place in their hearts, then they can never act on principle no matter what duties they are performing or what problems they are dealing with. People living within their intentions and selfish desires are incapable of entering the truth reality. For this reason, if they encounter a problem, and they do not examine their intentions and cannot recognize where their intentions are erroneous, but instead they use all kinds of justifications to manufacture lies and excuses for themselves, what happens in the end? They do quite a good job of protecting their own interests, pride, and interpersonal relationships, but they have lost their normal relationship with God"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Attitude Man Should Have Toward God). As I contemplated God's words, I felt so hurt and upset. When issues arose, I didn't seek the truth or act according to principles, but instead favored and shielded my family, upholding my fleshly feelings and

personal interests in every respect. This was me acting by my feelings and it was a corrupt disposition—it was totally at odds with God’s intention. I was someone with incredibly strong feelings, always thinking that my mom had endured hardships to raise me and expended so much for me, and because of this blood tie, I always wanted to protect her, and I approached her in a totally unprincipled way. When I saw the church’s work arrangements for readmitting people, my first thought was of my mom. I knew she was an evil person who had been cleared out by the church, but just going by some good behavior she exhibited, I wanted to get her accepted back into the church to please her and make her happy, and to maintain my familial relationship with her. Especially when I wrote her evaluation, I violated the principles of objectivity, fairness, truthfulness, and practicality. Influenced by my feelings, I favored and shielded her, and most of what I wrote was about her good points, making her sound like a positive person who pursued the truth, and even mentioning very little of her past evildoings. I was afraid that she had no genuine understanding of her evil deeds back then, so I specifically wrote to her to remind her and expose every one of her evil deeds so that she would have genuine understanding of herself and quickly repent and strive to be accepted back into the church. When collecting evaluations from those who knew her, I knew that the other three who had been expelled showed no signs of repentance, but I was afraid that if I only collected evaluations about my mom, then brothers and sisters would say I was acting on my feelings, so I covered it up by asking the leaders to provide evaluations of all four people. Every now and then, I’d also make urgent inquiries with the church leaders about their progress in collecting these evaluations thereby disturbing their duties. Wasn’t this me disrupting and disturbing church work? I was acting on my feelings, being calculating and using underhanded means. I could no longer tell right from wrong. I

acted totally without principle and wanted to readmit people at my own discretion—I was so selfish, despicable, and lacking in humanity! Even if by using such despicable means I could get my mom accepted again and maintain my emotional relationship with her, I would've been offending and resisting God and doing evil! Thinking this, I felt afraid for what I'd done.

I then read two more passages of God's words and came to some understanding of the nature and consequences of acting by one's feelings. Almighty God says: **"Some people are extremely sentimental. Every day, in all that they say, and in all of the ways they behave toward others, they live by their feelings. They feel affection for this person and that person, and they spend their days engaged in the niceties of affection. In everything they encounter, they live in the realm of feelings. When such a person's nonbelieving relative dies, they will cry for three days and not allow the body to be buried. They still have feelings for the deceased and their feelings are too acute. You could say that feelings are this person's fatal flaw. They are constrained by their feelings in all matters, they are incapable of practicing the truth or acting according to principle, and they are often prone to rebel against God. Feelings are their greatest weakness, their fatal flaw, and their feelings are entirely able to bring them to ruin and destroy them. People who are overly sentimental are incapable of putting the truth into practice or submitting to God. They are preoccupied with the flesh and they are foolish and muddleheaded. It is that sort of person's nature to be very sentimental, and they live by their feelings"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are rebellious against God? Are they not**

those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and treat them with conscience and love, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league with demons? If people have made it to this point and are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any desire to seek God's intentions or being able in any way to take God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of justice? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them, then are you not rebellious? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?" (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). I understood from God's words that, to maintain family relationships, people whose feelings are too strong will at key moments violate principles and sell out the truth, and do things which resist and betray God, thereby making God detest and hate them. Compared with my state, I was living by the satanic poisons of "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from feelings?" and "Blood is thicker than water," regarding family bonds as most important and taking advantage of my duty to find ways to get my mom accepted back into the church. I wasn't seeking the truth at all. I was just going by my mom saying she repented and some good behavior she exhibited and wanted to get her accepted back into the church. I asked people to write

evaluations of her, wanting to provide evidence for her to be readmitted, and I specifically wrote to her exposing her evil deeds so that she would quickly understand, repent, and strive to soon get accepted back into the church. I thought about how, ever since I'd started doing cleansing work, the materials I'd handled for people who'd been cleared out and applicants for readmission were all checked according to principles, but I was dealing with my mom very leniently and never during this time did I seek the truth principles. Especially when I wrote an evaluation for my mom, I intentionally engaged in deceit and deception, saying only good things on her behalf, and gave her fellowship to get her to quickly repent. Even though I felt self-reproach, I still stubbornly acted in violation of principles, wanting to get a dyed-in-the-wool evil person accepted back into the church. I insisted on finding ways to readmit someone God detested and hated into the church based on my feelings—wasn't this me deliberately going against God and disrupting and disturbing church work? I thought about how people in the nation ruled by the great red dragon bend the law in their favor. When someone becomes an official and holds power, their relatives and friends all benefit along with them, and they can be promoted and put into important positions no matter whether they are good or bad, without regard for law and order. I disregarded the principles of God's house and had no God-fearing heart at all. I violated principles and stubbornly wanted my mom to be accepted back into the church. Without realizing it, I became a shield for an evil person—I really made God detest and hate me! The church's principles for accepting people say: Some people do all kinds of evil and recklessly commit misdeeds, causing disturbances to church work, so they are expelled. If, after they are expelled, they truly repent of their evil deeds, and can gain more people, good people, when preaching the gospel, then such people can be considered for acceptance

and given a chance if they apply to rejoin the church; if a church reaccepts most people who have been cleared out, then that is at odds with the principles. Because the essence of an evil person is forever that of an evil person, it is not possible for them to truly repent; one must have a God-fearing heart when it comes to the matter of readmitting people into the church, seek the truth and clearly discern the manifestations and essence of each person, and strive to not wrongly accuse a good person and not accept a bad or evil person back. I thought that if I violated principles and accepted my mom back into the church, and she didn't have any understanding of her evil deeds and didn't truly repent, then when a suitable chance came, she would surely continue to do evil, provoke, incite, and mislead people, disrupt and disturb church work, and then I'd be a part of this evil and would be playing the part of Satan's lackey! I saw that my feelings were my vital weakness, an obstacle and stumbling block to me practicing the truth. I'd been blinded by feelings and couldn't see things in accordance with God's words. I'd violated principles in my duty to maintain the feelings between my mom and me. All I'd done was resist and betray God, and carrying on that way would've been so dangerous! Thankfully, I was pruned, and this put a timely stop to my advancing evil. Otherwise, I'd have accepted my mom back into the church and disturbed church work and the life entry of brothers and sisters, and wouldn't I then have become an evil person's accomplice? The consequences would've been unthinkable! I was filled with remorse, self-reproach, and indebtedness to God, and I felt so grateful to God for protecting me. I resolved to never again act by my feelings and hurt God's heart, and I became willing to seek the truth and act according to principle.

Later, I sought again the relevant principles and determined that none of the four people had any genuine understanding of their evil deeds. In

their letters of repentance, some of them were still indirectly justifying themselves so that people would wrongly think there had been justifiable reasons for their evil. According to the church's principles for readmitting people, I determined that none of these four people could be accepted back into the church. I thought of these words of God: **“By what principle do God's words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. If your parents do not believe in God, if they know full well that faith in God is the right path, and that it can lead to salvation, yet remain unreceptive, then there is no doubt that they are people who are averse to and hate the truth, and that they are people who resist and hate God—and God naturally abhors and hates them. Could you abhor such parents? They oppose and revile God—in which case they are surely demons and Satans. Could you hate and curse them? These are all real questions. If your parents prevent you from believing in God, how should you treat them? As is asked by God, you should love what God loves, and hate what God hates. During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, ‘Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?’ ‘For whoever shall follow the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.’ These words already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God's words are even more clear: ‘Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.’ These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to grasp their true meaning”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing

One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). Contemplating God's words, I understood that only those who could accept and practice the truth and protect the work of God's house are true brothers and sisters, and one should help these people with a loving heart. As for those evil people who don't practice the truth at all and are even averse to the truth, and refuse to repent after doing evil and causing disturbances, one should reject them. Only practicing in this way accords with God's intention and requirement. I found the principle to deal with my mom—love that which God loves and hate that which God hates. In terms of blood ties, she is my mom, but her nature is one that is averse to and hates the truth, she does not truly understand or repent of her evil deeds. According to the evaluations provided by brothers and sisters, my mom's views on things are just the same as the nonbelievers' and she pursues worldly trends, and her essence of a disbeliever and evil person has been revealed. God hates and detests such people, and He does not save evil people, so I must treat my mom according to the truth principles, as only this accords with God's intention. In the end, in accordance with the church's principles for accepting people and truths related to discerning good behavior and true repentance, I wrote a letter to the church leaders giving my recommendations for handling these people. The church leaders then replied by letter, saying that through learning and investigating over this period, they saw that my mom just exhibited some good behavior, that she did not truly understand or repent of her evil deeds, and that none of these four people met the principles for being readmitted and could not be accepted back into the church. I felt at ease then and came to appreciate that only by not being constrained by feelings and acting according to principle can one's heart be truly liberated. It is entirely the result of the guidance of God's words that I was able to gain such practice.

62. I've Finally Gained Some Self-Awareness

By Jiang Ning, China

A ray of warm light shone into the studio one late winter afternoon. Jiang Ning, Yi Chen, and Liu Fei were actively discussing their next innovative painting project. Though this work was quite difficult, they were full of faith, particularly Jiang Ning, who had a confident look on her face and thought, “I’ve got a good basis in painting and my grasp on composition and color theory is pretty good too. I’m also smart, a strong learner, and take new things on board quickly, and so long as I have more time to study and practice, I’m sure to master these skills and create works in this style.” The three of them then began looking up various materials to study, exchanging their findings with one another. Their supervisor often came to study with them too. After a while, Jiang Ning felt that she had come to grips with this new painting style. Yi Chen and Liu Fei also said that Jiang Ning was a strong learner, that the works she was producing were good, and that Jiang Ning should later share with them what she had learned and gained in her studies. Jiang Ning was delighted to hear their praise, and she thought, “My skills are stronger than my partnered sisters’, I’m often inspired when I discuss painting ideas with them, and I play a leading role in the team.” The more she thought like this, the more full of herself she became, and unconsciously, she began to do her duty with a sense of superiority.

One morning, Jiang Ning, Yi Chen, and Liu Fei were discussing the composition of a painting. After voicing her opinion, Jiang Ning listened carefully to the views of her sisters, but the more she listened, the deeper she frowned, and a look of disdain appeared on her face. She thought, “I’m a more gifted painter than the both of you. When studying new techniques, I

learn them faster than you. Also, I have a better grasp of the principles. How could I misinterpret practical applications now? Why won't you both just listen to my opinions?" Before Liu Fei could finish, Jiang Ning interrupted impatiently and asked pointedly, "You say there's something wrong with the painting. Can you say what exactly? What is missing? How should it be amended? Don't be so vague, I don't understand what you're getting at." Stunned for a moment by Jiang Ning's interruption, Liu Fei replied uneasily, "Right now I just have an idea, I haven't considered the details yet—" Not waiting for Liu Fei to finish, Jiang Ning hastily restated her opinion, impatient for Liu Fei to accept her point of view. Yi Chen and Liu Fei were visibly uncomfortable, and the room fell silent. Seeing that the atmosphere had become tense, Jiang Ning felt a little guilty, "Was I being too overbearing and arrogant?" But then she thought, "It's normal for there to be some conflict when discussing issues," and she didn't reflect on her problems. Later on, Jiang Ning learned from the supervisor that her views had been wrong, and the work had been impacted, but she still didn't reflect on herself. She would often argue with her sisters on the matters relating to their duties, and the supervisor fellowshiped with them about harmonious collaboration and gave Jiang Ning advice regarding her arrogant disposition, but she didn't take any of this to heart. She felt that although she revealed a somewhat arrogant disposition, she was able to play a role in her duty, and that since her opinions were usually correct, it was no big deal if she was a little arrogant. So whenever she disagreed with her sisters, Jiang Ning would almost never back down. She'd always just keep reiterating her opinions over and over again, trying to convince her two sisters to listen to her. In her heart, she clung to a single thought, "You're both wrong, and only what I say aligns with principles." Because of her attitude, her two sisters didn't know how they should fellowship. At times

when the three of them discussed a picture together, their discussions would often get stuck halfway, leading to a larger and larger backlog of work. Faced with this, Jiang Ning realized that she was being too arrogant, always insisting on her own views, and seriously delaying progress. She thought that she mustn't be like this anymore. However, when the sisters made suggestions again, she continued to insist on her own views, and made modifications according to her own ideas, meaning more time had to be spent on further discussions later, which delayed progress. In the end, it was confirmed that the sisters' suggestions were correct and that Jiang Ning was adhering to regulations. In this way, they were always working inefficiently, and their work progress couldn't improve. Because Jiang Ning was so arrogant, always stubborn, and incapable of taking advice, her drawings often had lots of problems and had to be redone. Their supervisor specifically pointed out Jiang Ning's problems, guiding her to reflect on why there were so many problems in the work, and whether this had anything to do with her arrogant disposition. But Jiang Ning just couldn't accept this, and thought, "Who doesn't make mistakes in their duties? I have a good understanding of principles and techniques, and these deviations were just momentary lapses. Next time, I'll put more effort into improving my techniques and be more careful, and then I'll avoid making these mistakes." Xiao Yi heard that Jiang Ning was a skilled drawer and often wrote to her, asking for her guidance on his drawings. Jiang Ning felt that this was truly beneath her, thinking, "Many of your drawings don't have much value, is my guidance really necessary? Also, there's such a backlog of drawings right now, how am I supposed to find the time to guide you?" So she put Xiao Yi's questions aside, and when the next few letters from him came through, she pretended she hadn't seen them. Xiao Yi eventually stopped asking.

One morning, as it was drizzling outside, Jiang Ning drew a landscape with a frown on her face. Yi Chen and Liu Fei looked at one another, stood up, and sat beside Jiang Ning. Yi Chen said softly, “Jiang Ning, can we talk to you?” Jiang Ning was momentarily lost in thought, and then replied casually, “Yeah, sure.” Wearing a slightly serious expression, Yi Chen said, “Lately, in our duties together, we feel that you’ve been really overbearing, that you’ve been acting aloof, and when we discuss problems, if your opinion differs, you tend to ask questions back and interrogate others. It’s been really constraining being around you.” Hearing Yi Chen say this, Jiang Ning’s face darkened, and she hesitated before speaking. She acknowledged her arrogant disposition, but inwardly, she was unwilling to accept it. She thought, “I’ve been trying to turn things around lately. An arrogant disposition can’t be changed overnight. Just give me some time, okay?” The more she thought about it, the more wronged she felt. She felt that Yi Chen and Liu Fei saw her corruption as something they could hold against her and that their remarks were clearly targeting her, but she also knew that she had to have some reason toward being pruned, so she restrained herself and answered through gritted teeth, “I’ll take what you’ve said on board,” and said nothing more. Worry and anxiety were visible in Yi Chen and Liu Fei’s eyes. The light rainfall outside showed no sign of stopping and the sisters’ brief exchange ended there.

From then on, to avoid being called arrogant by her sisters, Jiang Ning stopped expressing her opinions during discussions. When the other two asked for her views, she remained stubbornly silent, making the atmosphere really awkward. Some decisions regarding drawings were made in haste without thorough discussion, leading to drawings having to be reworked and modified later on. Yi Chen and Liu Fei both felt really constrained by their sister. A few days later, their supervisor came to meet with them and

discovered that Jiang Ning had had no self-knowledge for such a long time, and that she was being unreasonable, setting herself against her sisters, disrupting and obstructing work. The supervisor dissected her behavior and dismissed her. Soon after, Jiang Ning learned that the brothers and sisters had reported her for chiding people and making people feel constrained. One sister even said, “Now that Jiang Ning’s been dismissed, we finally won’t have to be around her, and we can breathe easy again!” Hearing these things, Jiang Ning felt a heart-piercing pain, and it was only then that she realized how serious her problems were. She became aware that in doing her duty recently, she had been constraining and harming others. She felt like an evil person and was filled with a sense of imminent catastrophe. She thought, “I’m done for this time, I’ve committed great evil in my duty,” and she didn’t know how to get through this situation. Her eyes filled with tears, and she prayed to God, “Oh God, I have constrained and harmed my brothers and sisters because of my arrogant disposition, and I have obstructed the work. All I have left behind me are evil deeds! I am so deeply remorseful, and I regret not recognizing and resolving my arrogant disposition sooner. Oh God, I don’t know how to get through what I’m about to face. Please guide me.”

During her spiritual reflection, Jiang Ning remembered a passage of God’s words that she had read before: **“Arrogance is the root of man’s corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more unreasonable they are, and the more unreasonable they are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with an arrogant disposition consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God, and they have no God-fearing hearts. Even though people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all.**

They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one’s arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His sovereignty, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power and control others. This sort of person does not have a God-fearing heart in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their reason, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him, and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most and have absolutely no God-fearing hearts” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Having read God’s words, she felt that her arrogant disposition was very serious. No matter how many mistakes or deviations she had made, she had never felt she had done anything wrong. She lacked any attitude of accepting or seeking the truth, and insisted that everyone should listen to and obey her. When she encountered differing opinions, she would arrogantly criticize her sisters, saying they were wrong about this or that thing, and then force them to listen to her. If she didn’t reach her goals, she would be hotheaded and interrogate her sisters in an aggressive tone. Sometimes, she would cut them off before they were done talking, using a pressing tone to refute them, making them feel really constrained. But she hadn’t had any self-knowledge. She’d felt that she was just sticking to her views or showing independent thought. Even when she was arguing with others, she thought she was just taking the principles seriously, not that she was being stubborn. Reflecting on this, she knew that if she really wanted to take the principles

seriously, she wouldn't be so set on the idea that she was always right. Instead, she would put aside her own views and consider whether others' suggestions aligned with principles and benefited the work. This would be an attitude of seeking and accepting the truth. However, she'd never put aside her own views, and even though she'd outwardly discussed issues with the sisters she had already made up her mind that she was right. She'd lacked the humility to seek the whole time. She had been so stubborn. She felt deeply ashamed. She had been filled with corrupt dispositions, hadn't understood the truth, and had lacked principles in her actions. Though she understood some technical things, she lacked much, and was limited in her thinking. She relied solely on her own mind and experiences, which meant she not only did her duty poorly, but she also caused many deviations, thereby harming the work. She needed to work harmoniously with others so they could make up for one another's shortfalls. If she wasn't clear on a principle or couldn't reach an agreement, she should seek guidance from the supervisor, rather than force others to accept her suggestions. However, she had thought too highly of herself and that everything she said was correct, as if she herself were the source of truth principles. She finally came to realize how arrogant she had been, lacking the reason a person with normal humanity should have. She realized that in reality, the suggestions others had made had often been correct, perhaps enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, and could help her realize her shortfalls and insufficiencies. However, she had been indifferent toward the suggestions of her sisters and had not recognized her corrupt disposition. She had even harmed those around her and obstructed the work of the church. She realized that all of this had been due to her arrogant nature, and that living by such an arrogant disposition had not only caused her to look down on others, but also on the truth and on God. If she didn't resolve this arrogant disposition, it would be

hard for her to accept the truth, fulfill her duty, and to relinquish herself and cooperate harmoniously with others. Jiang Ning finally felt just how dangerous it would be to leave this arrogant disposition unchanged!

Later on, Jiang Ning read the words of God: **“Arranging for you to be a leader is merely elevating you and giving you a chance to practice. It’s not because you possess more reality than others or because you are better than others. In fact, you are the same as everyone else. None of you possess reality, and in some ways, you may even be more corrupt than others. So why would you unreasonably cause trouble, and arbitrarily lecture, berate and constrain others? Why force others to listen to you, even when you are wrong? What does this prove? This proves you are in the wrong position. You aren’t working from the position of a human, you are doing your work from God’s position, from a position above others. If what you say is correct and accords with the truth, others can listen to you. It is acceptable in this case. But when you are wrong, why do you force others to listen to you? Do you have authority? Are you supreme? Are you the truth? ... They do whatever they want and demand that others do whatever they say. Aren’t they magnifying themselves? Aren’t they exalting themselves? Aren’t they arrogant and conceited people? In their duty, they follow their own preferences as much as possible without practicing the truth in the slightest. So, when they lead people, they do not ask those they lead to practice the truth. Instead, they demand that others listen to what they say and follow their ways. Is this not asking that people treat them like God and obey them as God? Do they possess the truth? They are devoid of the truth, filled with the disposition of Satan, and are demonic. So why do they still ask that people obey them? Is someone like this not magnifying themselves? Are they not exalting themselves?**

Can individuals such as this bring people before God? Can they make people worship God? They are the one they want people to obey. When they work like this, are they truly leading people in entering into truth realities? Are they really doing work entrusted to them by God? No, they are trying to establish their own kingdom. They want to be God, and they want people to treat them like God and obey them like God. Are they not antichrists? The way of antichrists has always been this way; regardless of the delay to the church's work or the degree of obstruction or harm to the life entry of God's chosen, everyone must obey them and listen to them. Is this not the nature of demons? Is this not the disposition of Satan? People like this are living demons in human skin. They may have human faces, but everything inside them is demonic. Everything they say and do is demonic. Nothing they do is in line with the truth, none of it is what people with reason do, so there can be no doubt that these are the actions of demons, Satan, and antichrists. You should be able to clearly discern this. So when you act, speak, and interact with others—in everything you do in life—you should hold this decree in your heart: 'Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God.' This way restraints are placed upon people, and they will not go so far as to offend God's disposition. This administrative decree is crucial, and all of you should give good thought to what this administrative decree means, why God requires this of mankind, and what He means to achieve. Consider this carefully. Don't let it simply go in one ear and out the other. This will be really beneficial for you" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On God's Administrative Decrees in the Age of Kingdom). God exposes that always forcing others to listen to and obey you, and trying to put others under your control is the exaltation of the self, it means you

are walking the path of an antichrist, and it violates the administrative decrees and offends the disposition of God. Jiang Ning thought back on what she had revealed recently—always thinking that she understood technical things and that she had a good grasp on principles, that her views and suggestions were the most correct and that everyone else was below her. When her sisters put forward differing views, she'd give them no consideration and throw them aside, continually trying to convince others to listen to her. If she couldn't persuade them, she'd just rely on her impetuosity to interrogate them, only letting up once they gave up on their own ideas. Jiang Ning recalled God's demand: **"Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God."** No matter the place or duty, we must honor God as great, seek His intentions in all things, and seek the truth principles, and especially when disagreements arise, it is even more important to set ourselves aside and adopt whoever's viewpoint aligns with the truth. Only this is the behavior of a person with a God-fearing heart who honors God as great. However, Jiang Ning had been living by the poisons of Satan, being extremely conceited and considering herself to be the greatest and her opinions as the truth principles. Whenever she heard differing suggestions, no matter who put them forward or whether they aligned with the truth, so long as they differed from her own views, she would throw them aside and just try to make others obey her. Her arrogance had caused her to lose her reason. Jiang Ning thought about the CCP, and about how no matter what it did, it never allowed anyone to oppose it, and that as soon as a dissenting opinion emerged, it would use all kinds of means to crack down on it. She thought about how the disposition she had revealed in her actions was the same as the CCP's and she was filled with fear.

One day, Jiang Ning read some of God's words. They made her recognize her arrogant disposition even more clearly. Almighty God says: **"Being arrogant and self-righteous is man's most conspicuous satanic disposition, and if people do not accept the truth, they will have no way of cleansing it. People all have arrogant and self-righteous dispositions, and they are always conceited. No matter what they think, or what they say, or how they see things, they always think that their own points of view and their own attitudes are correct, and that what others say is not as good or as right as what they say. They always cling to their own opinions, and no matter who speaks, they will not listen to them. Even if what someone else says is correct, or in line with the truth, they will not accept it; they will only appear to be listening but they will not really adopt the idea, and when it comes time to act, they will still do things their own way, always thinking that what they say is right and reasonable. It is possible that what you say is, indeed, right and reasonable, or that what you have done is right and faultless, but what kind of disposition have you revealed? Is it not one of arrogance and self-righteousness? If you do not cast off this arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not affect your performance of your duty? Will it not affect your practice of the truth? If you do not resolve your arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not cause you serious setbacks in the future? You will definitely experience setbacks, this is inevitable. Tell Me, can God see such behavior of man? God is more than able to see it! God not only scrutinizes the depths of people's hearts, He also observes their every word and deed at all times and places. What will God say when He sees this behavior of yours? God will say: 'You are intransigent! It's understandable that you might cling to your own ideas when you do not know that you are mistaken,**

but when you clearly know that you are mistaken and you still cling to your ideas, and would die before repenting, you are just a stubborn fool, and you are in trouble. If, no matter who makes a suggestion, you always adopt a negative, resistant attitude toward it, and do not accept even a little bit of the truth, and if your heart is completely resistant, closed, and dismissive, then you are so ridiculous, you are an absurd person! You are too difficult to deal with!’ In what way are you difficult to deal with? You are difficult to deal with because what you are displaying is not an erroneous approach, or an erroneous behavior, but a revelation of your disposition. A revelation of what disposition? A disposition in which you are averse to the truth, and hate the truth” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). **“If your attitude is to stubbornly insist, to deny the truth, to reject anyone else’s suggestions, to not seek the truth, to only have faith in yourself, and to only do as you want—if this is your attitude regardless of what God does or asks, then what is God’s reaction? God pays you no heed, He sidelines you. Are you not willful? Are you not arrogant? Do you not always think you’re right? If you are devoid of submission, if you never seek, if your heart is utterly closed and resistant to God, then God pays you no heed. Why does God pay you no heed? Because if your heart is closed to God, can you accept God’s enlightenment? Can you feel it when God reproaches you? When people are intransigent, when their satanic nature and beastliness burst forth, they don’t feel anything God does, it is all to no avail—so God does not do useless work. If you have this kind of stubbornly antagonistic attitude, all that God does is to remain hidden from you, God will not do superfluous things”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Having read these two passages of God’s words, Jiang

Ning realized that she had been really stubborn and completely unwilling to accept others' suggestions, and that she had revealed a satanic disposition that was averse to the truth and which incurred God's disgust and hatred. Now she understood that she should have accepted the differing suggestions of her sisters first and then sought truth principles alongside them. Perhaps she could have found her own shortcomings, reduced the deviations in her work, and maybe in the end, her viewpoints might have been proven right. However, throughout this process, the crucial point was to maintain an attitude of accepting the truth, which is also what God values. Additionally, reaching consensus through seeking principles is also beneficial to work. Jiang Ning came to understand that every time her sisters had differing views or opinions, this contained God's intention, which prompted her to seek the truth principles, that when her sisters voiced different opinions it was for the purpose of discussing and seeking together, to minimize deviations as much as possible, and that this was done to safeguard the work of the church. She understood that she should accept and obey these things. But she had never taken her sisters' reminders to heart, and even when they had different views, she just thought that they lacked understanding of principles or techniques, and would force them to accept her own viewpoint. This had not only made her sisters feel constrained, but it had also harmed the work greatly. Though outwardly it seemed like Jiang Ning was not accepting others' suggestions and arguing with them, in reality, she was revealing a disposition of being averse to the truth, and a hostility and resistance toward positive things. Jiang Ning realized that this attitude toward the truth was despised by God, that she could not gain the work of the Holy Spirit by doing her duty this way, and that she couldn't even understand her own state. She had, to a degree, become numb. If it weren't for her dismissal, she still wouldn't have awakened and would be

unable to seek the truth and resolve her arrogant disposition. Realizing these things, Jiang Ning was filled with gratitude for God for saving her in time.

Later, Jiang Ning reflected on why she had always been so arrogant. One day, she read a passage of God's words: **"No matter how educated you are, what awards you have won, or what you have achieved, and no matter how high your status and rank might be, you must let go of all of these things, you must get off your high horse—this all counts for nothing. In God's house, however great these glories are, they cannot be higher than the truth, for these superficial things are not the truth, and cannot take its place. You must be clear about this issue. If you say, 'I am very gifted, I have a very sharp mind, I have quick reflexes, I am a quick learner, and I have an exceedingly good memory, so I am qualified to make the final decision,' if you always use these things as capital, and see them as precious, and as positive, then this is trouble. If your heart is occupied by these things, if they have taken root in your heart, it will be hard for you to accept the truth—and the consequences of that don't bear thinking about. Thus, you must first put down and deny those things that you love, that seem nice, that are precious to you. Those things are not the truth; rather, they can block you from entering the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). Jiang Ning saw that God says that no matter how many gifts a person has, they are not the truth and cannot replace it. A person cannot do their duties properly if they just rely on their gifts and don't seek the truth. If one places too much importance on their gifts, this can actually hinder their seeking and acceptance of the truth. Jiang Ning had found the source of her problems to be the excessive importance she placed on intelligence, gifts and technical skills. Every time she

encountered a new duty, she came to grips with the professional and technical aspects quickly and she thought herself to be smart and better than others, and it was from this that she derived her sense of superiority in her duty. Like when she and her sisters tried a new painting style; at first, they'd all found it difficult, but Jiang Ning had quickly mastered it and went on to create a number of works, instilling in her a sense of superiority over her sisters and causing her to look down on them throughout their collaboration and to feel as if their views and suggestions had no value, making her completely unwilling to collaborate with them. This failure made Jiang Ning realize that her keen intellect could only help her to learn a professional or technical skill better and more quickly, but that in the house of God, every duty involves the truth and testifying for God. Being able to do one's duty well does not depend on whether one has a keen mind or gifts, nor does it depend on professional or technical skills. The crucial thing is whether a person can seek the truth principles, and act in accordance with God's intentions and requirements. These things are the most important. Jiang Ning thought back to when she first started learning new skills. She knew she understood very little, so in her duty she had a heart that was humble and sought. She had been able to accept and seek out the views of others, and in the process, she had been able to gain the work of the Holy Spirit, and her duty had gained some results. But later on, thinking she had learned everything, she became more and more arrogant and looked down on everyone. This attitude of hers disgusted God and she was unable to gain the work of the Holy Spirit. She also had many deviations in her duty. She finally realized that whether a person can do a duty well has little relation to their intelligence and gifts, and that gifts are just a tool for people to do their duties. Even if a person possesses no gifts, if they can focus on seeking the truth and working harmoniously with

others, their duty will yield some results. Jiang Ning had always looked down on the two sisters she had worked with, but now she saw that although they didn't have great gifts, they were both able to seek the truth principles based on the suggestions of others. This attitude of accepting and seeking the truth was far better than her own attitude. She finally saw clearly that in order to fulfill a duty well, the most important thing is to seek and accept the truth, have a God-fearing heart and be devoid of stubbornness.

Jiang Ning sought further on how exactly she should cooperate harmoniously with others in her duty. She read a passage of God's words: **"When something befalls you, you must not be self-righteous. You must quiet yourself before God and learn a lesson. You must be able to let go of yourself in order to learn more. If you think, 'I'm more of an expert at this than you, so I should be in charge, and you should all listen to me!'"—what kind of disposition is that? It is arrogance and self-righteousness. It is a satanic, corrupt disposition and it is not something within the realm of normal humanity. ... What, then, is the right way to behave and act? How can you behave and act in accordance with the truth principles? You must put your ideas out on the table and let everyone see if there are any problems with them. If someone makes a suggestion, you must first accept it, and then let everyone confirm the correct path of practice. If nobody has any issues with it, you can then determine the most appropriate way of doing things and act in that way. If a problem is discovered, then you must solicit everyone's opinions, and you should all seek the truth and fellowship on it together, and in that way, you will gain the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. When your hearts are illuminated, and you have a better path, the results that you achieve will be better than before. Is this not the**

guidance of God? It is a marvelous thing! If you can avoid being self-righteous, if you can let go of your imaginings and ideas, and if you can listen to others' correct opinions, you will be able to obtain the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Your heart will be illuminated and you will be able to find the correct path. You will have a way forward, and when you put it into practice, it will definitely be in accordance with the truth. Through such practice and experience you will learn how to practice the truth, and at the same time you will learn something new about that area of work. Is this not a good thing? Through this you will realize that when things happen to you, you must not be self-righteous and you must seek the truth, and that if you are self-righteous and do not accept the truth, everyone will dislike you and God will certainly loathe you. Is this not a lesson learned? If you always pursue in this way and practice the truth, you will keep honing the professional skills that you use in your duty, you will get better and better results in your duty, and God will enlighten and bless you, and allow you to gain even more. In addition to that, you will have a path for practicing the truth, and when you know how to practice the truth, you will gradually grasp the principles. When you know which actions will lead to God's enlightenment and guidance, which will lead to His loathing and dismissal, and which will lead to His approval and blessings, you will have a way forward" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). From God's words, she came to understand the principles of harmonious cooperation. In one's duty, if others put forward differing suggestions, no matter whether they understand professional matters or not, one must have an attitude of accepting and seeking the truth, and start by accepting their suggestions without following them blindly, and then one

must look at what the principles say and use the truth principles to decide the course. Later on, Jiang Ning was lucky enough to return to her design duty. She was so grateful to God and wanted to work in harmony with the others this time.

One day, Xiao Yu checked her drawing and pointed out several issues in her composition. Hearing this, Jiang Ning felt that her sister had not understood her intentions, and she had also consulted some good works, so her composition should be suitable. The more she thought about this, the more she felt that Xiao Yu was being too picky and regulation-conscious, so she reiterated her idea once again. But after she said this, Xiao Yu said, “I understand your idea, but I really think there are some problems with this composition. You can consider whether there is a more suitable solution.” Hearing Xiao Yu say this, Jiang Ning suddenly realized that she was emphasizing her point of view over and over again just to prove herself right to her sister. She didn’t seriously consider her sister’s suggestion and just thought that she was right. Wasn’t she still just being stubborn and not accepting the suggestions of others at all? Jiang Ning felt a little remorseful and realized that she was revealing a corrupt disposition again. She thought about the principle of practice that when faced with differing opinions she must first set herself aside, carefully consider whether others’ views are correct, and whether they align with principles. When she settled down to consider things, she found that there were indeed some issues in her composition. Afterward, Jiang Ning sought her supervisor out about the parts she was unsure about, her supervisor fellowshiped the relevant principles to her, and she gained a clearer path by which to perform her revisions. After this, she felt very glad. It was a good thing she wasn’t stubborn this time, as this would have brought about deviations. This made her realize just how important an attitude of accepting the truth is in the

performance of one's duty, and that no matter how correct or sure one feels, when others have different opinions, one must first put one's own views aside, consider things, and seek. This is because it is very likely that God is using others as a guide to reveal one's problems. Jiang Ning found that an attitude of accepting the truth can help one avoid lots of deviations. Going forward in her duty, Jiang Ning consciously accepted others' suggestions, and she felt that she gained a lot and that she was able to cooperate harmoniously with her brothers and sisters. Her heart was filled with gratitude for God!

63. What Impurities Are Hidden Behind Pointing Out Issues?

By Ding Zhen, China

In November of 2021, I was chosen as a church leader. Because I was active in my duties and my work got some results, the brothers and sisters looked up to me quite a bit. The upper leaders also thought highly of me and would often inquire about my state. Other churches had potential gospel recipients to preach to, and the gospel supervisor put me forward to spread the gospel. The sister I was cooperating with also praised me for having such caliber at such a young age. I was so happy and thought, “Even though I’ve not been a leader for long, the brothers, sisters, and upper leaders all look up to me, and those in other churches also know that I’m capable of work. It seems like I’m pretty good at what I do, and everyone must think of me as a rare talent.” These thoughts made me feel really happy, and I always felt full of energy.

In May of 2022, Liu Yun was transferred to our church to work as a leader. Once Liu Yun arrived at our church, she started familiarizing herself with the staff and also following up on the progress of various tasks. She discovered that one of the homes where books were being kept was unsafe and that there were some problems that had to do with the violation of principles. She also found someone who aired some nonbelieving remarks during gatherings, was disturbing church life, and who had not made amends despite repeated fellowships. Liu Yun reminded us that we had to learn discernment and isolate this person according to principles. Liu Yun went on to actively support newcomers who were negative, weak, and gathering irregularly, and gradually, the newcomers’ states began improving. She also managed to convert a few people. Seeing these things,

I felt that Liu Yun really was a capable worker who was able to find and resolve problems, but I also felt a sense of bitterness within me, “We’re both church leaders, but there were some problems she resolved that I didn’t even notice. Everyone must be comparing us and thinking Liu Yun is better than me. Won’t my status in the eyes of others be slipping a bit?” Later on, at a co-worker meeting, Liu Yun mentioned how she had been supporting the newcomers recently. The upper leaders nodded in approval as they listened and the cooperating brothers and sisters also listened with rapt attention. I saw that everyone was paying more and more attention to her, and I felt uncomfortable and a little neglected, thinking, “I used to talk about my experiential knowledge a lot in gatherings and the leaders used to value me quite a bit too. Now, everyone’s attention is focused on Liu Yun. If things go on like this, who’s going to pay attention to or look up to me? No, I have to make everyone see that she’s lacking. This will take some of the wind out of her sails and dampen her spirits, while also stopping everyone from looking up to her. It’ll turn everyone’s attention back to me and I’ll be able to restore my halo.”

After this, while cooperating with Liu Yun, I’d consciously fix on her flaws and shortcomings. I found that she showed off sometimes and I wanted to talk about this problem of hers. But the truth was that others had already pointed out this shortcoming and she had made amends somewhat. But in order to grab this opportunity to put a dampener on Liu Yun, I made an inner tally of the things she bragged about and made a mental note of them, so that when I gave her some “guidance and help,” I must have an irrefutable basis and make her see that her corrupt disposition in this area was still very serious, and that she’d still barely changed. That way, she’d keep her head down a little more and I’d be able to stand out. Later on, I found some of God’s harsh words of exposure and judgment to apply to her.

Seeing these harsh words of God, I thought to myself, “Liu Yun is only revealing a little corruption and is trying to change. If I apply these words of God to her, will she be able to cope?” But then I thought, “She’s believed in God for years; she should be fine. Besides, she really does have this problem, and if she becomes negative and weak, and her work starts to slip because she can’t accept it, this’ll just allow me to stand out.” Then, I simply found some of God’s words regarding practice for her to enter, thinking this way nobody would suspect my ulterior motives. The next day, during a co-worker meeting, I listened to her bring up her state, saying that she’d been busy with external matters lately and not been focused on life entry, and that although she didn’t want to walk the path of Paul, she couldn’t help herself—before she had finished speaking, I couldn’t hold back. I thought, “Since she wants to focus on life entry, I can take this moment as a chance to point out her problems and make her see her shortcomings. More importantly, the upper leaders, brothers, and sisters are all here, so if I speak out, everyone will know about her shortcomings and stop admiring her so much. And when everyone sees how I’m able to give her guidance and help, they’ll see me as someone carrying a burden. I’d be getting two birds with one stone!” With this in mind, I raised my voice a little higher than usual, and said to Liu Yun in a slightly over-eager tone, “You keep saying that you want to focus on life entry, but you don’t have a specific path of practice. You could really start by reflecting on small things. I’ve written down some of your issues that I’ve seen. You can reflect on these a little.” As I spoke, I began unfolding the letter I’d written listing the ways she’d shown off. I then spoke to her in a serious tone about the attitude God has toward those who like to show off and I dissected the path these people were on and the consequences of walking it. I then proposed a few paths of practice. After I did all these things, Liu Yun looked somewhat

uncomfortable and ashamed, and said, “I accept what you’ve said, and I need to take some time to reflect.” I felt a little guilty when she said this, and was afraid everyone would see that I had ulterior motives. But then I thought, “What I said was true, and besides, I also found a few paths of practice, so there should be no big deal.” The upper leaders, brothers, and sisters didn’t refute me, so it seemed they were in agreement with me. This thought made me feel a little more relieved.

One evening a couple of days later, while Liu Yun and I were discussing work together, I felt a faint unease about the “help” I had given her, and asked about her state. She said it wasn’t too good. She felt that being a believer for so many years, but barely being able to change this aspect of her corrupt disposition determined that she was incapable of change, and she felt really negative. I felt uneasy hearing this, thinking, “Could it be that my pointing out her problem hurt her to the point of making her feel negative?” I then made use of God’s words to carefully fellowship on the path to resolve this aspect of her corrupt disposition, and then told her that she needed to face this correctly and mend her state. I saw her gain a little understanding, which made me feel slightly more at peace. Later on, I reflected on myself in light of this matter and prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to recognize my own corrupt disposition. I read these passages in God’s words: **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God’s house, have a bad disposition, and**

God has no love for them” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). **“The third technique antichrists use to control people: They exclude and attack those who pursue the truth. Some people love positive things, justice and light, and fellowship about the truth. They often seek out brothers and sisters who pursue and seek the truth to fellowship with. An antichrist’s temper flares to see this. To them, everyone who pursues the truth is a needle in their eye, a thorn in their side; they’d have all who pursue the truth on the receiving end of their attacks, exclusion, and assaults. Of course, an antichrist won’t only attack these people with brutal, savage tactics that are obvious enough for people to see through. They’ll adopt the manner of fellowshiping the truth, and with a few words and doctrines, they’ll pass judgment on people and strike at them. This makes people think that what they’re doing is proper and reasonable, that they’re being helpful—that there’s nothing wrong with what they’re doing. What are these ‘proper and reasonable’ methods of theirs? (They quote God’s words to pass judgment on people and strike at them.) Correct—they quote God’s words to expose people and pass judgment on them. That’s their most common method. On the surface, this way of speaking seems fair, reasonable, and quite proper, but inside, their intent isn’t to help others to their benefit, but to expose them, pass judgment on them, condemn them, and degrade them. That is absolutely what they’re out to accomplish. So, the problem’s in where they start out from”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Three: They Exclude and Attack Those Who Pursue the Truth). **“Antichrists’ public suppression of people, exclusion of people, attacks against people, and exposure of people’s problems are all targeted. Without a doubt, they use means such as these to target those who pursue the**

truth and can discern them. By breaking these people down, they achieve the goal of strengthening their own position. Attacking and excluding people like this is malicious in nature. There is aggression in their language and manner of speech: exposure, condemnation, slander, and evil calumny. They even twist facts, speaking of positive things as though they were negative and negative as though they were positive. Reversing black and white and mixing up right and wrong like this accomplishes antichrists' goal of defeating people and ruining their name. What mindset is giving rise to this attack and exclusion of dissenters? Most of the time, it comes from a jealous mindset. In a vicious disposition, jealousy carries strong hatred with it; and as a result of their jealousy, antichrists attack and exclude people. In a situation such as this, if antichrists are exposed, reported, lose their status, and suffer an attack in their mind, they will not submit nor be happy about it, and it will be even easier for them to create a strong mindset of revenge. Revenge is a type of mindset, and it is also a type of corrupt disposition. When antichrists see that what someone did was damaging to them, that others are more capable than them, or that someone's statements and suggestions are better or wiser than theirs, and everyone agrees with that person's statements and suggestions, the antichrists feel their position is threatened, jealousy and hatred arise in their hearts, and they attack and take revenge. When taking revenge, antichrists generally deliver a preemptive blow to their target. They are proactive in attacking and breaking people down, until the other party submits. Only then do they feel they have let off steam. What other manifestations are there of attacking and excluding people? (Belittling others.) Belittling others is one of the ways it is manifested; no matter how good a job you do, antichrists will still belittle you or condemn

you, until you are negative and weak and cannot stand. Then they will be happy, and they will have accomplished their goal” (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). Having read God’s words, I realized that I had been afraid of the others only caring about Liu Yun and not looking up to me, which is why I attacked and excluded her, and that this was a malicious disposition. Liu Yun came to support our church and not only did some real work, but also helped me with my own duties. But I didn’t think of how to cooperate harmoniously with her in fulfilling duties or protecting church work, I only thought of her as a threat to my status and feared that if things went on as they had, nobody would look up to me, so I deliberately sought out her shortcomings and then exploited them, using “guidance and help” as a way to attack her. Though it looked like I was helping her understand herself, in reality, I was just jealous of her being better than me in every way. I wanted her to delimit herself and feel despondent after reading God’s words of exposure and judgment, so that she wouldn’t stand out as much. I saw that my “helping” Liu Yun was really just a pretense to attack her. I’d been jealous of her and I had wanted to strike her down, make her feel negative, and keep her beneath me. My actions were the same as those of an antichrist who attacks and excludes those who pursue the truth, using seemingly legitimate and reasonable methods to suppress people thereby consolidating their status in the eyes of the brothers and sisters. What this revealed was a vicious disposition! The connotations of God’s words made me feel that God holds disgust and hatred toward antichrists’ dispositions and I was flooded with a sense of distress and fear. I thought that God was certain to loathe me. So I prayed to God, “Oh Almighty God, I wish to repent. I don’t want to attack or exclude my brothers or sisters again. Please have mercy on me and allow me to gain some true recognition of myself from this.”

Later on, I read more of God's words which gave me some understanding of my problem. Almighty God says: **"What kind of disposition is it when a person sees someone who is better than them and they try to bring them down, spreading rumors about them, or employing despicable means to denigrate them and undermine their reputation—even trampling all over them—in order to protect their own place in people's minds? This is not just arrogance and conceit, it is the disposition of Satan, it is a malicious disposition. That this person can attack and alienate people who are better and stronger than them is insidious and wicked. And that they will stop at nothing to bring people down shows that there is much of a devil in them! Living by the disposition of Satan, they are liable to belittle people, to try to stitch them up, to make things hard for them. Is this not evildoing? And living like this, they still think they're okay, that they're a good person—yet when they see someone better than them, they are liable to give them a hard time, to trample all over them. What is the issue here? Are people who are capable of committing such evil deeds not unscrupulous and willful? Such people only think of their own interests, they only consider their own feelings, and all they want is to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and aims. They don't care how much damage they cause to the work of the church, and they would prefer to sacrifice the interests of the house of God to protect their status in people's minds and their own reputation. Are people like this not arrogant and self-righteous, selfish and vile? Such people are not only arrogant and self-righteous, they are also extremely selfish and vile. They are not considerate of God's intentions at all. Do such people have God-fearing hearts? They do not have God-fearing hearts at all. This is why they act wantonly and do whatever they want, without any sense of blame,**

without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What is the nature of such behavior? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal reputation and status; they are too deceitful and insidious. To put it more harshly, the essence of the problem is that such people have no God-fearing heart at all. They are not frightened of God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is not worthy of mention and is insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Can those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not have God-fearing hearts, put the truth into practice? Absolutely not. So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are for the sake of their own status and prestige, of protecting all of their interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What kind of people have believed in God for many years, yet have no God-fearing hearts? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satans? And what things most lack a God-fearing heart? Apart from the beasts, it is the evil and the antichrists, the devils and Satan's ilk. They don't accept the truth at all; they are entirely without a God-fearing heart. They are capable of any evil; they are the enemies of God, and the enemies of His chosen people” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Reading God's words and aligning them with my own behavior,

I understood that my excluding and suppressing of others was rooted in my complete lack of a God-fearing heart. My ideas, thoughts, and actions were all for the sake of my own reputation and status. Before Liu Yun arrived, I stood out in every way, but when I saw how she outdid me in all respects, I became jealous and incapable of accepting her superiority, and didn't want to let her surpass me. This is why I exploited the corruption she revealed and used "helping" her as a seemingly legitimate way to humiliate her, make everyone see her flaws, and regain people's admiration. In the course of this, I used God's words as a weapon to attack her, wanting to make her feel negative and disinclined to do her duty, allowing me to stand out and preventing others from seeing my despicable intention. I was so insidious and wicked! I had lived by satanic poisons, thinking the church wasn't big enough for us both. I couldn't tolerate anyone surpassing or outdoing me in the church. I wanted to continue enjoying the admiration of others and hold a place in their hearts just because I was achieving some results in my work. Liu Yun was a capable worker, was effective in her duties, and was able to drive forward various church tasks, but I didn't think of how to collaborate harmoniously with her in doing duties or protecting church work. I only thought about being the one who shone the brightest, to the point of attacking Liu Yun to make her feel negative and to magnify myself. I gave no consideration at all as to whether this would impact church work, and I saw that I had had no God-fearing heart whatsoever. God requires brothers and sisters to cooperate in service and fulfill their duties with their hearts and minds as one. However, when I saw somebody in the church capable of doing real work and resolving problems, I only thought about how she might deprive me of the admiration of others, so I excluded and suppressed her. I treated the church as a place to showcase my abilities, and what I did was causing disruptions and disturbances, which is something God truly

detests! I said a silent prayer to God, “Oh God, Your words of judgment, exposure, guidance, and provision have allowed me to gradually gain some understanding of myself, and I see that chasing reputation and status can only place me in resistance to You. I no longer wish to stand against You. I am willing to practice according to Your words. Please guide me!”

After this, I read more of God’s words: **“As one member of created humanity, a person must keep their own position, and conduct themselves conscientiously. Dutifully guard that which is entrusted to you by the Creator. Do not act out of line, or do things beyond your range of ability or which are loathsome to God. Do not try to be a great person, a superman, or a grand individual, and do not seek to become God. This is how people should not desire to be. Seeking to become great or a superman is absurd. Seeking to become God is even more disgraceful; it is disgusting, and despicable. What is commendable, and what created beings should hold to more than anything else, is to become a true created being; this is the only goal that all people should pursue”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). **“For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God’s house in everything, and to let go of one’s selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God’s house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one’s duty. You should first think of the interests of God’s house, be considerate of God’s intentions, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how**

others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should show consideration for God's intentions, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition).

Reading God's words made me understand that God requires us to conduct ourselves conscientiously, do our duties properly, and do all things before Him and accept His scrutiny. When we see others surpassing us, we should have a God-fearing heart, pray to Him more, put aside our pursuit of admiration, reputation, and status, and start by considering the interests of God's house, how to do our duties well, how to act in a way that pleases God, and then we should cooperate harmoniously with others to fulfill our duties and satisfy God, and do things that benefit the lives of our brothers and sisters. By conducting ourselves and doing things in this way, we can live openly and attain God's approval. Once I understood these things, I took the initiative to open up to Liu Yun and the others about the corruption I had been revealing. I was quite embarrassed as I did this, so I said a silent

prayer, asking God to grant me courage. The brothers and sisters didn't look down on me after my confession, and Liu Yun said that through my guiding and pruning her, she had come to understand her corrupt disposition a little more. Seeing that Liu Yun had been able to face things correctly and gain some entry, I thanked God from the bottom of my heart, and I also thanked God for giving me the chance to know myself, repent, and change.

A while later, Liu Yun was discussing work together with us, and she talked about some of her views on the work. I thought to myself, "You speak so well and so much, how am I supposed to stand out? The truth is that there are some areas of your follow-up work that are still lacking. I have to point out these shortcomings in your follow-up work so that our co-workers can see the deviations in your recent duties." At this moment, I realized, that I wanted to seek others' admiration again and to surpass Liu Yun. I thought of what God said, that those who pursue reputation and status have no God-fearing heart whatsoever, and that only evil people and antichrists do such things. I began to hate myself a little and didn't want to carry on like this. I then recalled a hymn of God's words: **"Only by Accepting God's Scrutiny Can You Live Before Him."** It says: **"All that you do, every action, every intention, and every reaction should be brought before God. Even your daily spiritual life—your prayers, your closeness to God, how you eat and drink of God's words, your fellowship with your brothers and sisters, and your life within the church—and your service in partnership can be brought before God for His scrutiny. It is such practice that will help you achieve growth in life"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Perfects Those Who Accord With His Intentions). I said a silent prayer to God, "Oh Almighty God, I want to correct my desire to seek reputation and status and stop vying with Liu Yun. Please watch over and protect my heart. I am willing to accept Your

scrutiny.” After praying like this, I felt much more at peace. We then discussed how to move forward with our duties. We fellowshiped in mutual cooperation and gained some goals and direction. After practicing in this way, my heart felt more at peace and clearer, and I realized that practicing according to God’s words makes interacting with others effortless and harmonious. Thanks be to Almighty God!

64. Breaking Free From the Mire of Wealth and Renown

By Shen Jie, China

When I was young, my family was poor, and people often looked down on us. So I thought, “When I grow up, I must make a lot of money so they will hold me in high regard.” Later, I got married, but my husband’s family was also poor. I looked for ways to earn money wherever I could and never let go of any opportunity. We tried driving a taxi and selling vegetables, but we didn’t make much money. However, I didn’t give up. I saw my cousin make good money growing oyster mushrooms and building a nice house very quickly. So, I decided to learn mushroom farming from her. We worked hard from fall to spring, but when our mushrooms hit the market, there was an oversupply, and they were everywhere. We ended up not making any money. Our half a year’s effort was in vain. The long hours of bending down doing the work led to a herniated disc. I spent a lot of money on seeking medical treatments everywhere, worsening our already poor financial situation. Still, I didn’t give up. One day, I saw a news report about a large pigeon-breeding farm making millions of yuan a year. My eyes lit up, “Millions! There’s no pigeon-breeding farm around here. If I start now, I might become a boss in a few years.” So, we took out a loan to start raising pigeons. Seeing the pigeons breed made me feel fully energetic and motivated. But just as we were ready to sell our first batch, an avian flu outbreak came along, and we lost over 20,000 yuan. The thought of losing money after a year of hard work was like a knife cutting my heart. At night, lying in bed, I cried and asked myself, “Why is my fate so harsh? Why is it so difficult for me to make money when others seem to make it so easily?” The stress took a toll on my health. I couldn’t sleep or eat and my stomach

was ill. My weight dropped to just a little over forty kilograms and I staggered when walking. Even then, I refused to give up, thinking, “I have a brain and two hands like others do. I’m not less smart than anyone else. I don’t believe I can’t make money! I have to give it a shot again!” Later, I heard that selling barbecue was profitable. Despite my poor health, I went to another city to learn the trade. After coming home, I opened a barbecue restaurant. Due to fierce competition, the business didn’t last long before I had to close it down. I couldn’t understand why others could succeed in the same business, earning 3,000 yuan a night, while I couldn’t make any. I remembered my mother often told me that I had “great ambitions but a fragile fate.” I thought about how my sister made a fortune in a few years with her vegetable business and built a nice house, with hundreds of thousands in savings, while I had been struggling and failing for over a decade. Was it really my fate? The more I thought about it, the more distressed I felt. And I fell into despair, feeling hopeless and ill for days, not wanting to move, wishing I could just sleep forever and not wake up again. This life was too hard. My husband also drowned his sorrows in alcohol daily.

Afterward, we started our breakfast business. To my surprise, the business turned out very well. We had to wake up at 1 a.m. every day and work until 10 a.m. before we could eat breakfast ourselves. Going hungry like this worsened my stomach trouble, and I got acid reflux and hypoglycemia. It also brought on my husband’s cervical spondylosis, causing his arms to go numb and ache. The doctor advised him to take several days off for intravenous therapy. But he felt it was such a waste of time getting hooked up to an IV drip every day, and that it would be a great pity to miss out on a daily income of a thousand yuan. He opted for painkillers instead, planning to seek proper treatment when business

slowed. His condition worsened as time went by. He needed more and more painkillers, going from one pill at a time to two or three. When the pain got worse, he would swear at me, and his temper became more and more irritable. Our communication dwindled to almost nothing but arguments. The physical pain and the repression of my mind and spirit left me feeling lost. What was the point of all this hard work? I felt like a machine, working from morning till night. I was so exhausted that my waist was sore and my back was aching. We earned money but had no time to enjoy it. We used to say that money would bring us happiness, but why did I feel more miserable despite having money?

A year later, we returned to our home village to build a new house. I felt a sense of accomplishment, thinking about how we could finally live in a nice house after having struggled for a dozen or more years. Our neighbors, relatives, and friends praised our abilities and gumption, and they even proactively helped us source the materials needed for the construction. The Party branch secretary of the village also provided us with special assistance by securing approval for our building works. I felt different having lots of money, and everything seemed to go more smoothly. But then, just as things were starting to look up for us, tragedy struck. After we had demolished our old house, my husband complained about his severe neck pain and decided to go to the village hospital. By the time I arrived, the doctor urgently told me, “You’re here just in time! Your husband is in critical condition!” My mind went blank. “This is impossible,” I thought, “My husband has always been in good health and has rarely even caught a cold since we got married. How could he be dying now?” I rushed to the ward and saw my husband lying there. His facial complexion was dark and his eyes closed. I grabbed his hand and sobbed, calling out his name, but he never woke up again. The doctor explained that

my husband had suffered an acute stroke, likely related to his cervical spine condition compressing his blood vessels and thereby impeding his circulation. My husband's sudden death left me in a daze. "How will I, a woman with two children, manage to live on?" I thought, "All I ever wanted was to improve our lives and not be looked down on. After years of hard work, just when things had started getting better, my husband suddenly passed away. Why does everything I hope for seem so far away and out of reach?" I shut myself in my room, crying constantly. My sisters, worrying that I might harm myself, took turns to visit me daily. But they could only offer a few comforting words, which were totally unable to dispel the sorrow in my heart.

Later, a relative brought a sister to share the gospel with me. The sister read a passage of God's words to me: **"The Almighty has mercy on these people who have suffered deeply; at the same time, He feels averse toward these people who lack consciousness, as He has had to wait too long for an answer from humanity. He wishes to seek, to seek your heart and your spirit, to bring you water and food and to awaken you, that you may no longer be thirsty and hungry. When you are weary and when you begin to feel something of the bleak desolation of this world, do not be lost, do not cry. Almighty God, the Watcher, will embrace your arrival at any time. He is keeping watch by your side, waiting for you to turn back around. He is waiting for the day you suddenly recover your memory: when you realize that you came from God, that, at some unknown time you lost your direction, at some unknown time you lost consciousness on the road, and at some unknown time acquired a 'father'; when you realize, furthermore, that the Almighty has always been keeping watch, waiting there a very, very long time for your return. He has been watching with desperate**

longing, waiting for a response without an answer. His watching and waiting are beyond any price, and they are for the sake of the human heart and the human spirit. Perhaps this watching and waiting are indefinite, and perhaps they are at an end. But you should know exactly where your heart and your spirit are right now” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Sighing of the Almighty). As I heard **“When you are weary and when you begin to feel something of the bleak desolation of this world, do not be lost, do not cry. ... He is keeping watch by your side, waiting for you to turn back around,”** tears streamed down my face without me realizing it. I reflected on the hardships I’d endured over the years, and the unspeakably painful torment I had undergone. My parents had passed away, and my husband was also gone. To whom could I express my inner pain? Who could understand? God’s words touched my heart, and I felt all warm inside. I wanted so much to say out loud all the pain that had accumulated in my heart, but I didn’t know where to start. I just kept crying. The sister said, “I understand how you feel. What we say can only comfort you, but we can’t truly solve your pain. Only God can solve our pain.” I asked, “Where does all this pain come from? Can God really solve it?” The sister then read a passage of Almighty God’s words to me: **“There is an enormous secret in your heart, of which you have never been aware, for you have been living in a world without light. Your heart and your spirit have been wrested away by the evil one. Your eyes are obscured by darkness, and you can see neither the sun in the sky nor that twinkling star of the night. Your ears are clogged with deceptive words, and you hear neither the thunderous voice of Jehovah, nor the sound of the waters flowing from the throne. You have lost everything that is rightfully yours, everything that the Almighty bestowed upon you. You have entered an endless sea of affliction, with no strength to**

save yourself, no hope of survival, and all you do is struggle and rush about.... From that moment onward, you were doomed to be afflicted by the evil one, far away from the blessings of the Almighty, out of reach of the provisions of the Almighty, walking down a road of no return. A million calls can hardly rouse your heart and your spirit. You slumber soundly in the hands of the evil one, who has lured you into a boundless realm without direction or wayposts. Henceforth, you lost your original innocence and purity, and began to shun the care of the Almighty. Within your heart, the evil one steers you in all matters and has become your life. No longer do you fear him, avoid him, or doubt him; instead, you treat him as the god in your heart. You began to enshrine and worship him, and the two of you have become as inseparable as body and shadow, committed to live and die together. You have no idea from whence you came, why you were born, or why you will die. You look upon the Almighty as a stranger; you do not know His origins, let alone all that He has done for you” (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Sighing of the Almighty). The sister fellowshipped with me, “God has exposed the root cause of human suffering. In the beginning, God created humans and led them to live in the Garden of Eden. At that time, people listened to God, lived carefree lives, and didn’t experience these pains and troubles. However, after being tempted and corrupted by Satan, humans betrayed God, strayed from His care and protection, and fell under Satan’s power. Now people live in sin, scheming, intriguing, fighting, and framing each other for money, status, fame, and gain, and some even contemplate suicide. All this suffering was brought about by Satan. For thousands of years, Satan has inculcated humans with many philosophies for worldly dealings and many fallacies, such as ‘Money makes the world go round,’ ‘Create a better life with your own hands,’ and

‘A person’s destiny is in their own hands.’ People prefer to believe these devilish words of Satan rather than God’s sovereignty, living and pursuing based on these survival rules of Satan. Without God’s leadership and guidance, people passively go along with the evil trends of society, arduously chasing after money, status, fame, and gain year after year, without understanding the meaning of life, or where they came from or are going to. All of this leaves them feeling empty and anguished. Even though humans have betrayed God, He has not given up on saving humans. God has been leading and saving humans throughout the 6,000 years He has been doing His work, waiting for people to return to Him. In the last days, Almighty God, the Savior, has come down to earth in person, expressing truths to save humans. Only by accepting the truths that God expresses can humans discern Satan’s schemes and escape from Satan’s corruption and torment.” While listening to the sisters, I felt deeply moved. Wasn’t this exactly my situation? I had been working tirelessly day and night, just to earn more money in the hope that one day I could rise above the rest and gain people’s respect, and had ended up exhausted and sick, still feeling empty and anguished after all that. But I had never questioned whether living like this was wrong or not. Because it had been for generations, had it not? How could I be the exception? Only now did I understand that all this suffering was caused by Satan’s corruption and torment. If it weren’t for Almighty God, exposing the true picture of Satan’s corruption of humans, I would never have realized all this and would have continued being misled by Satan, and struggling in pain.

Later, I read more of Almighty God’s words: **“Because people do not recognize God’s orchestrations and God’s sovereignty, they always face fate defiantly and with a rebellious attitude, and they always want to cast off God’s authority and sovereignty and the things fate has in**

store, hoping in vain to change their current circumstances and alter their fate. But they can never succeed and are thwarted at every turn. This struggle, which takes place deep in one's soul, brings profound pain of the sort that carves itself into one's bones, as one fritters away their life all the while. What is the cause of this pain? Is it because of God's sovereignty, or because a person was born unlucky? Obviously, neither is true. At bottom, it is caused by the paths people take, the ways they choose to live their lives. ... if people cannot truly recognize the fact that the Creator has sovereignty over human fate and over all human matters, if they cannot truly submit to the Creator's dominion, then it will be difficult for them not to be driven and fettered by the idea that 'one's fate is in one's own hands.' It will be difficult for them to shake off the pain of their intense struggle against fate and the Creator's authority, and, needless to say, it will also be hard for them to become truly liberated and free, to become people who worship God"

(The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). As I read God's words, tears ran down my face, and my past experiences vividly replayed in my mind. To avoid being looked down upon, I had racked my brains and tried desperately to make money, believing that through perseverance and hard work alone, I could change my destiny with my own hands. Each time I had failed, I had maintained a defiant mentality, thinking that if others with a brain and two hands could become wealthy, so could I if I tried hard. After all, I had a brain and two hands of my own, and was no less smart than them. I thought that my past failures were due to a lack of experience or not having the right opportunity. I had treated fallacies like "One must endure the greatest hardships in order to become the greatest of men," and "Change your destiny with your own hands" as wise sayings, and no matter how many times I failed, I had persistently fought against my fate with a never-

give-up mentality, in the belief that hard work could alter destiny, and persistently striving to become superior to others. This had left me with numerous ailments, and even cost my husband his life. All of this was due to Satan's corruption and torment! In the past, I had often blamed fate for being unfair to me. Only now did I realize that it wasn't that God had treated me ungraciously or that my fate was bad. Instead, it was that my choice of path and way of living were wrong. I hadn't recognized God's sovereignty and couldn't submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. I had always wanted to change my current situation and destiny with my own hands. For the sake of money, fame, and gain, I had struggled and suffered for over a decade. Only now did I realize that all this suffering had come from being corrupted and tormented by Satan, due to my ignorance of the truth. From that point onward, whenever I had time, I would read God's words, always eager to understand more truths.

One day, I read a passage of God's words: **"In fact, no matter how lofty man's ideals are, no matter how realistic man's desires are or how proper they may be, all that man wants to achieve, all that man seeks for, is inextricably linked to two words. These two words are vitally important to the life of every person, and they are things Satan intends to instill in man. What are these two words? They are 'fame' and 'gain.' Satan uses a very subtle kind of method, a method very much in concert with people's notions, which is not at all radical, through which it causes people to unknowingly accept its way of living, its rules to live by, and to establish life goals and their direction in life, and unknowingly they also come to have ambitions in life. No matter how grand these life ambitions may seem, they are inextricably linked to 'fame' and 'gain.' Everything that any great or famous person—all people, in fact—follow in life relates only to these two words: 'fame'**

and ‘gain.’ People think that once they have fame and gain, they can then capitalize on those things to enjoy high status and great wealth, and to enjoy life. They think fame and gain are a kind of capital that they can use to obtain a life of pleasure-seeking and wanton enjoyment of the flesh. For the sake of this fame and gain which mankind so covets, people willingly, albeit unknowingly, hand over their bodies, minds, all that they have, their futures and their destinies, to Satan. They do so genuinely and without even a moment’s hesitation, ever ignorant of the need to recover all that they have handed over. Can people retain any control over themselves once they have taken refuge in Satan in this way and become loyal to it? Certainly not. They are completely and utterly controlled by Satan. They have completely and utterly sunk into a quagmire, and are unable to free themselves” (The

Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). Reflecting on God’s words, I realized that money, fame, and gain are ways in which Satan corrupts people. Satan uses societal influences and family upbringing to instill many false beliefs in me, such as “Man struggles upward; water flows downward,” “Aim to stand out and excel,” and “Money is first.” Growing up poor and being discriminated against, I easily adopted these views, believing that with money, fame, and gain, I would be looked up to and be respected, be able to speak with confidence, and live a dignified and valuable life. To gain fame and gain, I racked my brains to find business opportunities, worked despite being ill, and even left my one-year-old son behind to travel thousands of miles to learn a skill. For the sake of fame and gain, despite being too busy to eat, and becoming dizzy and faint from hunger, which damaged my health, I never hesitated to make sacrifices. My husband, driven by the same desires, wouldn’t let go of the business, preferring to take painkillers rather than seek medical treatment. He finally

got rich but lost his life. Wasn't all this suffering caused by the pursuit of money, fame, and gain? Without understanding the truth and having discernment, I mistook the heresies and fallacies that Satan employs to corrupt man as the laws of survival and life goals. I was truly foolish and blind! Understanding this, I decided to devote myself to believing in God and pursuing the truth, rather than chasing after money, fame, and gain as I did in the past. I spent more time reading God's words daily and actively participated in fellowships. Three months later, I took on my duty in the church, practicing watering new believers.

My relatives, noticing I had stopped running my business, expressed their concerns, saying that with young children and many future expenses, I should continue the breakfast business. The landlord also called me, saying that many people enjoyed our food and hoped I would reopen the shop, and that he and his family would help me if I couldn't do it on my own. Their words stirred my thoughts, "It's true. With two children at school, my salary barely covers basic living costs. If I don't earn more money, my children and I will continue to be looked down upon. The breakfast business could bring in thousands of yuan a day. It's hard to let go of that. Maybe I could hire someone to help and restart the business?" I began planning and considering this option. However, I knew that reopening the breakfast business would require significant effort, leaving little time for me to do my duties in the church. It would be good enough for me to ensure that I join fellowships. Running a business always required my concerns. It would be challenging to focus on reading God's words and pursuing the truth, and my spiritual life would surely suffer losses. I felt torn and conflicted, losing sleep over it those days. One day, I read some of God's words: **"Most people have the following wishes: to work less and earn more, not to toil in the sun and rain, to dress well, to glow and shine everywhere, to**

tower above others, and to bring honor to their ancestors. People hope for perfection, but when they take their first steps in the journey of their lives, they gradually come to realize how imperfect human destiny is, and for the first time they truly grasp the fact that, though one can make bold plans for one's future and though one may harbor audacious fantasies, no one has the ability or the power to realize their own dreams, and no one is in a position to control their own future. There will always be some distance between one's dreams and the realities that one must confront; things are never as one would like them to be, and faced with such realities, people can never achieve satisfaction or contentment. Some people will go to any length imaginable, will put forth great efforts and make great sacrifices for the sake of their livelihoods and future, in an attempt to change their own fate. But in the end, even if they can realize their dreams and desires by means of their own hard work, they can never change their fates, and no matter how doggedly they try, they can never exceed what destiny has allotted them. Regardless of differences in ability, intelligence, and willpower, people are all equal before fate, which does not distinguish between the great and the small, the high and the low, the exalted and the mean. What occupation one pursues, what one does for a living, and how much wealth one amasses in life are not decided by one's parents, one's talents, one's efforts or one's ambitions, but are predetermined by the Creator” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). “If one has a positive attitude toward God's sovereignty over human fate, then when one looks back upon one's journey, when one truly experiences God's sovereignty, one will more earnestly desire to submit to everything that God has arranged, will have more determination and confidence to let God orchestrate one's fate and to

stop rebelling against God. For one sees that when one does not comprehend fate, when one does not understand God's sovereignty, when one gropes their way forward willfully, staggering and tottering through the fog, the journey is too difficult, too heartbreaking. So when people recognize God's sovereignty over human fate, the clever ones choose to know it and accept it, to bid farewell to the painful days when they tried to build a good life with their own two hands, and to stop struggling against fate and pursuing their so-called 'life goals' in their own way. When one does not have God, when one cannot see Him, when one cannot clearly recognize God's sovereignty, every day is meaningless, worthless, miserable. Wherever one is, whatever one's job is, one's means of living and the pursuit of one's goals bring one nothing but endless heartbreak and suffering without relief, such that one cannot bear to look back on one's past" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God.

God Himself, the Unique III). Reading God's words, I burst into tears. Reflecting on the painful days when I struggled against fate before knowing God, I realized that my agony stemmed from not recognizing God's sovereignty and resisting my fate with corrupt dispositions. The torment of not achieving what I desired was still fresh in my memory. Others could make millions from the same business while I ended up with nothing, even with great losses. This shows that how much money one can earn and whether one is rich or poor are predestined by God. It's not something that can be achieved just by one's efforts. In today's world, disasters are increasingly severe. If I prioritized earning money, seeking fame, gain, and status, giving up the opportunity to pursue the truth and gain salvation, wouldn't I be foolish and ignorant? Even if the breakfast business could bring in thousands of yuan a day, the emptiness and suffering from being distant from God cannot be compensated with money. I might not be wealthy now,

but I could still live a normal life. More importantly, I've come to understand some truths and the meaning of life. I could also do my duties in the church, which brought me peace and joy. With this realization, I decided to give up the business and focus on my duties. I sold the kitchen utensils in my shop at a low price to others.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"If people cannot truly recognize the fact that the Creator has sovereignty over human fate and over all human matters, if they cannot truly submit to the Creator's dominion, then it will be difficult for them not to be driven and fettered by the idea that 'one's fate is in one's own hands.'** It will be difficult for them to shake off the pain of their intense struggle against fate and the Creator's authority, and, needless to say, it will also be hard for them to become truly liberated and free, to become people who worship God. But there is an exceedingly simple way to free oneself from this state, which is to bid farewell to one's former way of living; to say goodbye to one's previous goals in life; to summarize and dissect one's previous lifestyle, view of life, pursuits, desires, and ideals; and then to compare them with God's intentions and demands for man, and see whether any of them is consistent with God's intentions and demands, whether any of them delivers the right values of life, leads one to a greater understanding of the truth, and allows one to live with humanity and the likeness of a human being. When you repeatedly investigate and carefully dissect the various goals that people pursue in life and their myriad ways of living, you will find not one of them conforms to the Creator's original intention with which He created humanity. All of them draw people away from the Creator's sovereignty and care; they are all traps which cause people to become depraved, and which lead them to hell. After you recognize this, your task is to lay aside your old

view of life, stay far from various traps, let God take charge of your life and make arrangements for you; it is to try only to submit to God's orchestrations and guidance, to live without individual choice, and to become a person who worships God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). **"Those who seek to know God are able to set aside their desires, are willing to submit to God's sovereignty and God's arrangement, and they try to be the kind of people who are submissive to God's authority and who satisfy God's intentions. Such people live in the light and in the midst of God's blessings, and they will surely be commended by God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. If you do not worship God but live within your filthy flesh, then are you not just a beast in human attire? Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. In this world, man wears the devil's clothing, eats food from the devil, and works and serves under the devil's thumb, becoming completely trampled in its filth. If you do not grasp the meaning of life or obtain the true way, then what significance is there in living like this? You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)).

God's words revealed to me what truly meaningful and valuable pursuits are in life. Now I was fortunate to encounter the Creator's work for saving man, which is a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and hearing the Creator's voice is something many people have been dreaming of. So I decided not to chase

after money, fame, and gain anymore but to submit to God's sovereignty and live according to His requirements. I thought of Peter. Upon hearing the call of the Lord Jesus, he left his fishing nets without hesitation to follow Him, eventually getting to know, submit to and love God. Job also lost everything but still praised God, bearing a beautiful testimony to God before Satan and ultimately being blessed to see God's appearance. Throughout history, many saints have forsaken everything, even their lives, to spread God's gospel, which is the most meaningful and valuable way to live. With these examples in mind, I knew I should be content with having clothes and food, and devote more energy to pursuing the truth and doing my duties. Seeking to know God is most valuable. After completely giving up my business, besides working and doing my duties, I spent the rest of my time reading God's words and singing hymns to praise God with my children. Each day, I felt peaceful and steady, and it was enjoyable. A few months later, my long-standing stomach ailment healed, which I knew was God's mercy. My children became more self-reliant in their studies and daily routines. They were especially obedient and sensible. By eating and drinking God's words, and doing my duties, I felt God's enlightenment and guidance. I gradually understood some truths. I gained a deeper understanding of God's almightiness and sovereignty, how Satan corrupted people, and how God saved humans. I also learned about how people should live and what pursuits are truly meaningful and valuable. The turmoil in my heart decreased significantly. I am deeply grateful for God's salvation!

65. Finding a Way to Resolve Lying

By An Ran, China

I was responsible for the watering work of several churches. I knew that being able to do this duty was God's elevation and grace, and I wanted to do this duty well to repay God's love. However, because I carried no burden, I delayed the work. I then did not reflect on myself and lied to protect my reputation and status. In light of the facts, I saw that I was deceitful and not a trustworthy person.

The environment was awful a while ago, and many brothers and sisters were arrested. The upper leader wrote to me, urging me to fellowship more on the truth of visions to newcomers so that they could understand God's work and stand firm in this terrible environment. On receiving this letter, I immediately fellowshipped with waterers on implementation, but I didn't follow up on the details of this work later on. I thought that since I had fellowshipped with the waterers, they would fellowship with the newcomers, and also, that because nobody from the churches I was responsible for had been arrested yet, there shouldn't be any major problems. But unexpectedly, shortly after this, the three churches I was responsible for were hit with large-scale arrests. The leader wrote to me again, asking how many newcomers in each church were attending gatherings regularly, how many were not gathering regularly due to the terrible environment, how many newcomers had been arrested, and how many had nobody to water them, and that I reply with these details promptly. Receiving this letter made me realize, "Even though I implemented this task, I didn't follow up on it in detail. I have no idea about the details the leader is asking for, how am I supposed to reply? What will he think of me if I tell him the truth? Will he say that I don't do real work?"

How could I even show my face if he prunes me? No, I can't tell the truth." I sat at my computer, thinking through my options, not knowing how to respond, until I finally hit upon an idea. I wrote to the leader saying, "The watering of newcomers on the truth of visions has been implemented and is being followed up on." After this, I rushed to follow up on the work, thinking, "When the leader asks again, I will give him a report on the situation I have just followed up on. This way, he won't know I've been irresponsible and that I didn't follow up on the work." Later on, when I actually went to the waterers to find out about the details of the situation, I found out that although they'd fellowshiped with the newcomers, they hadn't achieved anything, and also, that they too were unclear about the newcomers' situations. On learning these things, I finally realized that this had all been because I had carried no burdens and not actually followed up on work, and that the newcomers' life entry had been delayed. However, I still didn't seek the truth or reflect on myself, so the situation stayed the same.

Not long after, the upper leader arranged a gathering with us to learn about the details of the watering work, about how many newcomers each waterer was responsible for, how they resolved the newcomers' difficulties and notions, whether they were attentive in nurturing newcomers, and so on. Then I felt anxious, thinking, "I hope the leader won't ask me first, there's some work that I haven't fully implemented and a few details that would be really embarrassing to be unable to explain!" But things played out just as I'd feared, and the leader questioned me first. With no other option, I just had to put on a calm face, but inside, I just wanted to run. I thought to myself, "What if he asks for too many details that I can't explain, won't it seem like I haven't done any real work? That would be so humiliating! Would the leader and the other co-workers look down on me?"

The leader started by asking a few questions, which I just about struggled to answer one by one, but when the leader asked about Sister Yang Fan's watering of newcomers, I panicked, thinking, "I don't know about Yang Fan's work with newcomers, I'm done for, what am I supposed to say? If I'm honest with the leader and say I don't know, would he say 'You've been in charge of watering work for so long and you don't even know such basic details, how are you doing your job'? Wouldn't this disappoint the leader and make him look down on me?" With these things in mind, I just reported some of Yang Fan's earlier watering work to the leader. The guilt and anxiety of having said this made my heart pound, and my face burned. Even though I'd managed to bluff my way through and protect my reputation and status, I was filled with a sense of accusation and an undefinable pain, "Am I not just lying through my teeth? I'm such a hypocrite!" That night, I lay in bed, tossing and turning, unable to sleep, filled with regret about the lies I had told. But what had been said, had been said, and like spilled water, it couldn't be taken back, and it was too late to open up and lay myself bare. If the leader found out, would he call me a deceitful person? These thoughts ran through my head, and I couldn't muster up the courage to open up. I felt I had no integrity and dignity, and was like a real hypocrite. My heart pounded with anxiety, as if I had butterflies in my stomach, and I just kept questioning myself, "Why wasn't I able to tell the leader the truth? What's the point of this dishonesty?" The more I thought about it, the guiltier I felt, so I prayed to God in my heart, "Oh God! When the leader asked about the work details today, I clearly didn't know, but because I was scared of people looking down on me and of losing face, I lied through my teeth to deceive the leader. Oh God! I'm so deceitful, please grant me courage, so that I may be pure and open, and live as an honest person."

One day, I watched an experiential testimony video called The Pain of Telling Lies, there was a passage of God's words in this video that really moved me. Almighty God says: **"In their everyday lives, people often talk nonsense, tell lies, and say things that are ignorant, foolish, and defensive. Most of these things are said for the sake of vanity and pride, to satisfy their own egos. Speaking such falsehoods reveals their corrupt dispositions. ... Your lies have become too numerous. Every word you say is adulterated and insincere, and not a single one can be considered true or honest. Even though you don't feel that you've lost face when you tell lies, deep down, you feel disgraced. Your conscience blames you, and you hold a low opinion of yourself, thinking, 'Why am I living such a pitiful life? Is it so difficult to speak the truth? Must I resort to lies for the sake of my pride? Why is my life so exhausting?' You don't have to live an exhausting life. If you can practice being an honest person, you will be able to live a relaxed, free, and liberated life. However, you have chosen to uphold your pride and vanity by telling lies. Consequently, you live a tiresome and miserable existence, which is self-inflicted. One may gain a sense of pride by telling lies, but what is that sense of pride? It is just an empty thing, and it is completely worthless. Telling lies means selling out one's character and dignity. It strips away one's dignity and one's character; it displeases God, and He detests it. Is this worthwhile? It is not. Is this the correct path? No, it is not. People who frequently lie live according to their satanic dispositions; they live under Satan's power. They do not live in the light, nor do they live in the presence of God. You constantly think about how to lie and then after you lie, you have to think about how to cover up that lie. And when you do not cover up the lie well enough and it is exposed, you have to rack your brain to try and straighten out the**

contradictions and make it plausible. Is it not tiring to live in this way? Exhausting. Is it worth it? No, it is not worth it. Racking one's brain to tell lies and then to cover them up, all for the sake of pride, vanity, and status, what meaning is there in that? Finally, you reflect and think to yourself, 'What's the point? It's too exhausting to tell lies and to have to cover them up. Conducting myself in this manner won't work; it'd be easier if I just became an honest person.' You desire to become an honest person, but you cannot let go of your pride, vanity, and personal interests. Therefore, you can only resort to telling lies to uphold these things. If you are someone who loves the truth, you will endure various hardships in order to practice the truth. Even if it means sacrificing your reputation, status, and enduring ridicule and humiliation from others, you won't mind—as long as you are able to practice the truth and satisfy God, it is enough. Those who love the truth choose to practice it and be honest. This is the correct path and it is blessed by God. If a person does not love the truth, what do they choose? They choose to use lies to uphold their reputation, status, dignity, and character. They would rather be deceitful, and be detested and rejected by God. Such people reject the truth and reject God. They choose their own reputation and status; they want to be deceitful. They do not care about whether God is pleased or if He will save them. Can such people still be saved by God? Certainly not, because they have chosen the wrong path. They can only live by lying and cheating; they can only live painful lives of telling lies and covering them up and racking their brains to defend themselves every day. If you think that lies can uphold the reputation, status, vanity, and pride you desire, you are completely mistaken. In reality, by telling lies, not only do you fail to maintain your vanity and pride, and your dignity and character, more

grievously, you miss the opportunity to practice the truth and be an honest person. Even if you manage to protect your reputation, status, vanity, and pride at that moment, you have sacrificed the truth and betrayed God. This means you have completely lost your chance for Him to save and perfect you, which is the greatest loss and a lifelong regret. Those who are deceitful will never understand this” (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God’s words exposed my exact state. To protect my vanity and pride, and prevent people from looking down on me, I chose to lie and deceive them, sacrificing my integrity and dignity, rather than speak the truth. Regarding the most recent spate of arrests, the leader wrote to me to ask about how many newcomers in the area I was responsible for were gathering regularly and how many weren’t, and about the recent results in watering and supporting newcomers. I clearly hadn’t followed up on these tasks, and I should have been honest in my report to the leader, but to protect my vanity and status, I lied and said I was already following up on this. During the meeting, the leader asked me about Yang Fan’s watering of newcomers, I didn’t know the details, so I just lied through my teeth, reporting old information as if it were current in an effort to bluff my way out. Even though I recognized I was lying and felt accused, I still didn’t want to open up. To prevent others from looking down on me, I lied over and over again. I’d been so slippery and deceitful! I couldn’t stop asking myself, “Aren’t you a believer?” A true believer is able to tell the truth, be honest, and have integrity and dignity, and no matter the situation, they have the courage to face the truth and call a spade a spade, and although practicing in this way may allow others to see their shortcomings and insufficiencies, practicing the truth and living openly pleases God and allows others to trust them. But I had lied to protect my reputation and

status, lacked all integrity and dignity, and failed to live up to even the bare requirements of human conduct. God had graced me and granted me the opportunity to do a watering duty, hoping that I would be able to be sincere in my cooperation with Him and properly water the newcomers who truly believe in God. This was also God giving me a chance for practice to gain the truth, but I had failed to live up to God's earnest intention. Not only had I not carried any burden in my duty, I also chose to lie instead of practicing the truth when faced with issues. I had truly disappointed God. The more I thought about this, the more upset I became, and I hated myself for being so deceitful.

Later on, I sought within God's word to find the root of my lying and deceiving. I read a passage of God's words: **"When antichrists are exposed and pruned, the first thing they do is to look for various reasons in their defense, to look for all kinds of excuses to try and get themselves off the hook, thus accomplishing their goal of shirking their responsibilities, and achieving their aim of being forgiven. What the antichrists fear most is that God's chosen people will see through to their character, to their weaknesses and flaws, to their Achilles' heel, to their true caliber and work ability—so they try their utmost to package themselves in order to cover up their shortcomings, issues, and corrupt dispositions. When their evildoing is unmasked and exposed, the first thing they do is not admit or accept this fact, or do their utmost to make up for and compensate for their mistakes, instead they try to come up with various methods to use to cover them up, to hoodwink and mislead those who are privy to their actions, to not let God's chosen people see the true face of the matter, to not let them know how harmful their actions have been to God's house, how much they have disrupted and disturbed the work of the church. Of course, what they**

fear most is the Above finding out, because once the Above knows, they will be dealt with according to principle, and it will all be over for them, and they are bound to be dismissed and eliminated. And so, when the evildoing of antichrists is exposed, the first thing they do is not to reflect on where they went wrong, where they violated principles, why they did what they did, what disposition they were governed by, what their intents were, what their state was at the time, whether it was because of waywardness or because of the adulterations of their intents. Instead of dissecting these things, much less reflecting on them, they rack their brains for any way to cover up the true facts. At the same time, they do their utmost to explain and justify themselves in front of God's chosen people, in order to hoodwink them, making major problems seem like small ones, and small problems seem unproblematic, and bluffing their way out of it, so that they can remain in the house of God recklessly committing misdeeds and abusing their power, and continue to mislead and control people, and make them look up to them and do as they say to satisfy their ambitions and desires” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eleven). From the exposure of God's words, I saw that when there are deviations or holes in the work of antichrists, instead of learning lessons and promptly righting the problems and deviations in their work, they try every possible way they can to lie, cover up the truth, and prevent leaders from knowing of the problems and holes in their work, and that they try to use tricks and ruses to gain the trust of others. This is the wicked disposition of antichrists. Was what I had revealed not the disposition of an antichrist? When the leader came to supervise and follow up on my work, there were a lot of jobs I hadn't done, but not only did I not report the actual situation to him, I also hid the truth and deceived him, trying my best to cover up the truth that I hadn't done

real work. Later on, as the leader was looking into the watering of newcomers being done by each waterer, as I hadn't done real work and I didn't know specific details, I lied once again, and reported earlier watering work as work that had been done recently to fob off the leader. I was well aware that doing this was being deceitful and dishonest, but to preserve the good impression the leader had of me, I lied through my teeth to deceive him. I saw that the disposition I had revealed was the same wicked, despicable disposition of an antichrist. The leader's inquiry into my work showed that he was responsible and this would allow him to discover the deviations and problems in my work quickly. I remained silent about the problems in the work and put up a front for the leader to give him the false impression that I was doing real work. As a result, the leader was unable to find out about the truth, and the problems in my work went unsolved. By doing this, I was obstructing the work of the church. I saw that covering up the truth to prevent the leader from supervising work was in nature, far worse than not doing real work. Realizing this, I felt like I was in danger. I had had no God-fearing heart and had been walking the path of an antichrist. Inwardly, I prayed to God and repented, "Oh God, because of the exposure of Your words, I see that my disposition is wicked and despicable, and my heart is filled with fear. Please guide me to cast off this corrupt disposition and accept the supervision of others."

Later on, I read a passage of God's words: **"That God asks for people to be honest proves that He truly loathes and dislikes deceitful people. God's dislike of deceitful people is a dislike of their way of doing things, their dispositions, their intents and their methods of trickery; God dislikes all of these things. If deceitful people are able to accept the truth, admit to their deceitful dispositions, and are willing to accept God's salvation, then they too have a hope of being saved—for God**

treats all people equally, as does the truth. And so, if we wish to become people who please God, the first thing we must do is change our principles of comportment. No longer can we live according to satanic philosophies, no longer can we get by on lies and trickery. We must cast off all our lies and become honest people. Then God's view of us will change. Previously, people always relied on lies, pretense, and trickery while living among others, and used satanic philosophies as the basis of their existence, their lives, and the foundation for their comportment. This was something that God loathed. Among nonbelievers, if you speak frankly, tell the truth, and are an honest person, then you will be slandered, judged, and forsaken. So you follow worldly trends and live by satanic philosophies; you become more and more skilled at lying, and more and more deceitful. You also learn to use insidious means to achieve your goals and protect yourself. You become more and more prosperous in Satan's world, and as a result, you fall deeper and deeper into sin until you cannot extricate yourself. In God's house, things are precisely the opposite. The more you lie and play deceitful games, the more God's chosen people will become sick of you and forsake you. If you refuse to repent and still cling to satanic philosophies and logic, if you use ploys and elaborate schemes to disguise and package yourself, then you are very likely to be revealed and eliminated. This is because God loathes deceitful people. Only honest people can prosper in God's house, and deceitful people will eventually be forsaken and eliminated. All of this is preordained by God. Only honest people can have a share in the kingdom of heaven. If you do not try to be an honest person, and if you don't experience and practice in the direction of pursuing the truth, if you don't expose your own ugliness, and if you don't lay yourself bare, then you will never be able to receive the Holy Spirit's

work and gain God's approval" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). From God's words, I saw that God likes honest people, that honest people have the courage to face their shortcomings and deficiencies, that they are able to be truthful, do not deceive people or God, and that when faced with issues, they are able to seek and practice the truth. Such people are brought by God into the kingdom to live forever. God detests liars, deceivers, and those who employ tricks. Such people are deceitful and demonic. As the Bible says: **"You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stayed not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it"** (John 8:44). I saw that liars are all devils. Devils are the enemies of God and are hated by God. God will absolutely not save such people. This is determined by God's righteous and faithful essence. In my duty, I had lied to protect my vanity and status, attempting to cover up the shortfalls in my work. Doing so meant that I was betraying the truth, standing on the side of Satan, and resisting God. Moreover, by relying on concealment and pretense while doing duties in the church, I can only cover up the truth for so long, and in the long run, many deviations in work will be exposed, and once everyone knows the truth, they will discern and reject me, meaning I would shatter any semblance of integrity and dignity I might have and my chances to repent would be ruined. Reflecting on those antichrists, no matter how many bad things they do or how much they harm the work of God's house, they never reflect or repent, and if somebody supervises or looks into their work, they make use of an array of tricks to deceive them and cover up the truth, showing their absolute lack of acceptance toward the truth. Eventually, because of all the evil they commit, they are expelled from the church. Those who have the courage to be open

and who can practice the truth are honest in the eyes of God and are the ones who will be saved and remain. Conversely, those who try to deceive God for personal gain are extremely foolish and deceitful, and eventually, they will be eliminated by God.

Later on, I read more of God's words: **"When people do their duty or any work before God, their heart must be pure: It must be like a bowl of fresh water—crystal clear, without impurity. So what kind of attitude is correct? No matter what it is that you're doing, you are able to fellowship with others whatever is in your heart, whatever ideas you may have. If someone says that your way of doing things will not work, and they propose another idea, and if you feel it is a pretty good idea, then you give up your own way, and do things according to what they think. By doing that, everyone sees that you can accept others' suggestions, choose the correct path, act according to principles, and with transparency and clarity. There's no darkness in your heart, and you act and speak sincerely, relying on an attitude of honesty. You call a spade a spade. If it is, it is; if it isn't, it isn't. No tricks, no secrets, just a very transparent person"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God hopes that we approach our duties with a sincere heart, that we speak according to the facts, and that we accept His scrutiny in all things. When the leader inquired into my work again, I resolved to tell the truth if I hadn't done real work, to have the courage to face my problems, to stop lying to protect my reputation and status, and to practice being an honest person. Later on, I took the initiative to open up to the leader about lying for the sake of my reputation and status. After I opened up to him, the leader then fellowshiped on his own experience to help me. By practicing in this way, I felt much more liberated. Moving forward, I followed the leader's advice to promptly right deviations in my work, such as by quickly

dismissing unsuitable waterers, fellowshipping in detail with waterers about their duties, and then following up on and supervising their progress in their work. When I involved myself in the details of the work in this way, the work showed clear improvement.

A week later, the leader sent a letter asking about my nurturing of the waterers. Upon receiving this letter, I realized that I had been so busy following up on other work, that I had come to overlook the job of personnel nurturing, and that I didn't know how many people could be nurtured. How was I to respond? What would the leader think of me if he found out that I had been neglecting such an important job? Would he say that I wasn't doing real work? I thought, "Why not reply to him by saying I am in the process of following up on this work, this way, he won't find out the truth." Thinking like this, I suddenly realized, "Am I not just wanting to lie again to protect my reputation and status?" So I prayed inwardly to God, "Oh God! I don't want to lie or deceive anymore. I didn't do this task, and it's because I was irresponsible. I am willing to report this honestly to the leader." I felt a deep sense of peace after praying. I thought about how God likes honest people who can call a spade a spade, that I had to face things calmly, not conceal the truth, and that no matter what the leader thought of me, I had to practice being an honest person. So, I told the leader the truth, "I have not paid enough attention to nurturing talents, but I am willing to change this moving forward." Then, I started to actually cooperate, and a few days later I found two people who could be nurtured. After this, when the leader wrote to me again to look into and follow up on other work, even when some jobs weren't getting good results, I was willing to face this calmly and report these things honestly. Though I am still unable to meet the standards of being an honest person, I am willing to pursue the truth,

practice according to God's word, and gradually cast off my deceitful disposition.

66. Is Being Amiable a Principle of Conduct?

By Zi Yi, China

I remember when I was in first grade, our homeroom teacher was amiable and approachable and always had a kind look on her face. She never lost her temper with us or criticized us harshly. Sometimes she'd chat with us as if she weren't our teacher. We all liked being around her and our parents praised her for being a good teacher. I really looked up to and admired her and wanted to be someone like her. Later in life, no matter who I interacted with, I almost never argued with anyone. Even if somebody hurt me and I was annoyed with them or hated them, I still chose to grit my teeth and greet them with a smile to get along with them peacefully. Because of this, my classmates liked to be around me and my relatives all said I was well-behaved and sensible. After believing in God, I still got along with my brothers and sisters in this way, speaking gently and doing my best not to hurt anyone's pride. Even when I could see others had problems I'd always downplay things, which led to the others viewing me in a positive light and thus reinforced my belief that being this way was a good thing. It was only later, after going through a few things, and through the exposure of God's word, that I understood that being amiable is not a principle by which to conduct oneself and I came to understand how to conduct myself with the likeness of a real person.

In January of 2022, I was supervising some of the church's cleansing work. Li Yuan and Lin Xi had just started on this work, and they hadn't grasped the principles, so I followed up on their work a little more. At that time, I found that they were quite perfunctory in their duty and some obvious problems were appearing. One time, I noticed that in the clearing materials they had organized, the behaviors of some people had only been

summarized and details were lacking, with some cases lacking evidence and in need of further examples to confirm whether these people should be cleared out. If not clearly investigated and verified, a person could easily be wrongfully cleared out and expelled. This was a very serious problem. I saw just how careless the two of them were in organizing clearing materials and the more I thought about it, the angrier I got. So I said to my partnered sister Liu Jing, “Li Yuan and Lin Xi have just started working on this and they don’t seek advice on many of the things they don’t understand. They are so perfunctory in their duties. This time, I have to point out the problematic attitude they have toward their duty.” Liu Jing agreed with me. But when writing to the two of them, I hesitated, “When I was with them a few days ago their states seemed kind of negative, if I prune them and dissect the nature of their perfunctoriness in duties, will they become so negative that they quit? Will they say that I don’t understand their difficulties and that I’m being too demanding and harsh? Perhaps they’ll lose the good impression that they have of me.” To protect my own image, I only pointed out the deviations that they had caused and said nothing to expose their corrupt dispositions. I even couched this in a bunch of consolations and exhortations, such as encouraging them to view their shortcomings and deficiencies correctly and not live in negativity and misunderstanding. When Liu Jing read my letter, she said, “Weren’t you going to talk about the nature of the perfunctoriness in their duties? Why are you being so indirect? Do you think they’ll recognize their problem if you talk to them like this?” Hearing Liu Jing say this, I realized that beating around the bush in this way wasn’t going to get any results, but I was afraid of leaving a bad impression on them, so I found an excuse to skirt around the matter.

In February, I went to their group to discuss work. To avoid distancing myself from them, I told myself that I had to be gentle with them and careful with how I worded things, to not speak in an overly superior or harsh way. Seeing them joking around, I went along with them so that they'd see me as easygoing, approachable, and unpretentious, and able to get along with everyone. When I heard them say they hadn't made any progress and were feeling kind of despondent, I told them that I had lacked a lot in the past too, and that it had taken me a long time to gradually come to grips with some principles. I said this to comfort and encourage them. After a while, we had really gotten on good terms and one sister told me that it felt nice to interact like this, without any pressure. Hearing her say this, I became even more certain that conducting myself in this way was correct. One time, a team member, Chen Xin, told me that despite having been involved in this work for quite some time, she was still making mistakes all the time, thought she hadn't made any progress, and felt quite negative. I knew that Chen Xin's lack of progress was because she was impatient for results and compared herself with others and because she didn't focus on principles, but I was afraid that if I pointed out her problem directly, she might not take it well and form some kind of prejudice or negative view of me. So, I just encouraged her and said, "You've only just started out, and it's normal for there to be some problems or deviations in your work. It's just a matter of practice. You need to view yourself correctly, summarize the problems and deviations that occur and then learn the relevant principles in a targeted manner. This is how you'll progress." Because I didn't point out Chen Xin's problem, she didn't recognize her corrupt disposition and continued comparing herself with others and feeling negative when she couldn't measure up. Lin Xi was also being perfunctory in her duties, and numerous problems remained, impacting the progress of

the work. I knew that Lin Xi was way scummy in her duties and that I should have pruned and exposed her, but I was afraid of her having a bad impression of me and that she'd no longer support or endorse me. So, I just skimmed over her issues in passing, suggesting that her lack of progress might be due to incorrect intentions in her duty. Because of how I downplayed things, Lin Xi took none of what I said to heart, didn't amend the issue of her perfunctory attitude, and her work often had to be redone. Because I was only thinking of how to protect my relationships, I only ever talked about the issues I saw in a cursory manner, which didn't yield any results and delayed work. But I didn't reflect on or recognize myself.

In one gathering, we fellowshiped on God's words which expose how antichrists win over people's hearts. I happened to read a passage that applied directly to my state. I finally gained some knowledge of my behavior. Almighty God says: **"When a church leader sees brothers or sisters doing their duties perfunctorily, they may not rebuke them, though they should. When they clearly see that the interests of God's house are suffering, they do not concern themselves with this or make any inquiries, and they do not cause the least offense to others. In fact, they are not really showing consideration for people's weaknesses; instead, their intention and goal is to win over people's hearts. They are fully aware that: 'As long as I do this and don't cause offense to anyone, they'll think I'm a good leader. They'll have a good, high opinion of me. They'll approve of me and like me.' They don't care how much damage is done to the interests of God's house, or how great losses are caused to the life entry of God's chosen people, or how greatly their church life is disturbed, they just persist in their satanic philosophy and cause no offense to anyone. There is never any self-reproach in their hearts. When they see someone causing disruptions**

and disturbances, at the very most they might have a few words with them about it, downplaying the issue, and then be done with it. They will not fellowship on the truth, or point out the essence of the problem to that person, less still will they dissect their state, and they will never fellowship what God's intentions are. A false leader never exposes or dissects the errors people frequently make, or the corrupt dispositions people often reveal. They don't solve any real problems, but instead always indulge people's erroneous practices and revelations of corruption, and no matter how negative or weak people are, they do not take this seriously. They merely preach some words and doctrines and speak a few words of exhortation to deal with the situation in a perfunctory manner, trying to maintain harmony. As a result, God's chosen people do not know how to reflect on and know themselves, there is no resolution for whatever corrupt dispositions they reveal, and they live amid words and doctrines, notions and imaginings, without any life entry. They even believe in their hearts, 'Our leader has even more understanding for our weaknesses than God does. Our stature is too small to live up to God's requirements. We just need to fulfill the requirements of our leader; by submitting to our leader, we are submitting to God. If a day comes when the Above dismisses our leader, we will make ourselves heard; to keep our leader and stop them from being dismissed, we will negotiate with the Above and force them into agreeing to our demands. This is how we will do right by our leader.' When people have such thoughts in their hearts, when they have established such a relationship with their leader, and this kind of dependence, envy, and worship has arisen in their hearts toward their leader, they come to have ever greater faith in this leader, and always want to listen to the leader's words, rather than seeking the truth in

God's words. Such a leader has almost taken the place of God in people's hearts. If a leader is willing to maintain such a relationship with God's chosen people, if they derive a feeling of enjoyment from this in their heart, and believe that God's chosen people ought to treat them like this, then there is no difference between this leader and Paul, they have already set foot on the path of an antichrist, and God's chosen people have already been misled by this antichrist, and are completely lacking in discernment" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). God exposes that antichrists always consider people's flesh. They notice when brothers and sisters are perfunctory in their duty and delay church work, but they neither point this out nor prune them. Instead, they just indulge and accommodate people so that they can implant a good image of themselves in people's hearts, essentially winning them over. I felt as if God was exposing my own behavior. In my duty, I was always trying to protect my image and status in people's hearts. To make team members feel good about me, I usually behaved amiably, even paying particular attention to my tone of voice and attitude as I spoke. I was afraid that any misstep would leave people with a bad impression of me. I saw Chen Xin's stagnant progress and poor state, and I knew this was because she was always chasing reputation and status, comparing herself with others, and not focusing on her professional skills, and it was clear to me that if she carried on like this, that not only would this impact her own life entry, but that the work would also be delayed. I should have fellowshiped with her and pointed these things out, but I was afraid of offending her, so I only ever comforted, encouraged, and exhorted her. Chen Xin was unable to recognize her own problems and lived in a negative state, her life entry was being hindered and she was making very little professional progress. I was also well aware that Lin Xi was being

perfunctory in her duties and that I clearly needed to point out her issues and fellowship on their essence to help her reflect and understand matters, but I was afraid that pointing out her problems directly might cause her to view me negatively, so I just skimmed over them, which did nothing to resolve them. Realizing this, I finally understood that my conduct had been that of an antichrist trying to win over people's hearts. To gain the approval and support of the group members, I had always accommodated them, and I'd avoided pointing out problems or fellowshiping to resolve them. Not only had I delayed the life entry of my brothers and sisters, but I had also delayed the work of the church. I had been so selfish and despicable!

Later on, I opened up to the team members about how I had been trying to win people over. One of them said, "Last time, when our work had some deviations, you didn't prune us, and just sent us a letter of encouragement and exhortation instead. One sister even said, 'Look, she's trying to comfort us again.'" I felt even guiltier when I heard him say this. When the church clears a person out, they must be seriously evaluated in accordance with the truth principles. There is no room whatsoever for negligence or perfunctoriness. If we don't take it seriously or evaluate matters according to principles, it could easily lead to false charges and harm brothers and sisters. It had been clear to me that they were being perfunctory in their duties, and nearly disturbing the work of the church, but because I was scared of offending them, I didn't provide guidance or assistance, and completely ignored whether the work of the church was being impacted. My behavior was in resistance to God! This realization scared me, and I wanted to make amends as soon as possible.

Later on, I read a passage of God's word: **"When you interact with others, you must first have them perceive your true heart and sincerity. If, in speaking and working together and making contact with others,**

someone's words are perfunctory, grandiloquent, pleasantries, flattery, irresponsible, and imaginary, or if they simply speak to seek the other's favor, then their words lack all credibility, and they are not sincere in the least. This is their mode of interaction with others, no matter who those others are. Such a person does not have an honest heart. This is not an honest person. Say someone is in a negative state, and they say to you sincerely: 'Tell me why, exactly, I'm so negative. I just can't figure it out!' And suppose you do, in fact, understand their problem in your heart, but you do not tell them, instead saying: 'It's nothing. You're not being negative; I get that way, too.' These words are a great consolation to that person, but your attitude is not sincere. You are being perfunctory with them; so as to make them feel more comfortable and consoled, you have refrained from speaking honestly with them. You are not helping them in earnest and putting their problem plainly, so that they can leave their negativity behind. You have not done what an honest person should. All for the sake of trying to console them and make sure there is no estrangement or conflict between you, you have been perfunctory with them—and this is not what it is to be an honest person. So, to be an honest person, what should you do when encountering this kind of situation? You need to tell them what you have seen and identified: 'I will tell you what I have seen and what I have experienced. You decide whether what I say is right or wrong. If it's wrong, you don't have to accept it. If it's right, I hope you will. If I say something that is hard for you to hear and hurts you, I hope you can accept it from God. My intention and purpose is to help you. I see the issue clearly: Because you feel that you have been humiliated, and no one feeds your ego, and you think everyone else looks down on you, that you are being attacked, and that you have

never been so wronged, you can't accept it and become negative. What do you think—is this what's really going on?' And, hearing this, they feel it is indeed the case. This is what is actually in your heart, but if you are not an honest person, you will not say it. You will say, 'I often get negative, too,' and when the other person hears that everyone gets negative, they think it is normal for them to be negative, and, in the end, they do not leave their negativity behind. If you are an honest person and you help them with an honest attitude and an honest heart, you can help them understand the truth and leave their negativity behind'' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). Reading God's word gave me a path of practice. When interacting with one another, we must be frank and sincere. We must be able to speak honestly when we see others' problems, so they can recognize these problems of theirs. Treating people this way benefits their life entry. I saw that Lin Xi was being perfunctory in her duty, and yet I continued offering her insincere words of comfort and exhortation to gain her favor. This was harming her and a deceitful thing to do. Though pointing out her problem directly may have embarrassed her for a moment, it would have helped her to reflect and also protected the work of the church. Realizing this, I went to Lin Xi and fellowshipped with her using some of God's words that expose the essence and consequences of people being perfunctory. Lin Xi acknowledged just how scummy she had been, that she had been careless and not conscientious in her duties. Later on, I saw Lin Xi consciously trying to turn things around. She was more conscientious and responsible in her duties than before and she was making clear progress. Seeing this outcome made me feel so ashamed. I had always maintained an image of affability in people's eyes, only ever providing them with half-hearted platitudes, and did nothing to benefit them. Had I

pointed out Lin Xi's problems earlier, she would have been able to turn things around sooner, and it would have benefited the progress of the work. I later found out that Chen Xin was in a bad state, that she felt she was lacking in caliber and work abilities, and that she was inferior to her groupmates. She was also under the impression that I was looking down on her, so she was living in negativity and wanted to resign. I came to her and opened up in fellowship. I told her that she placed too much importance on reputation and status, and made use of God's word to fellowship with her on the essence and consequences of pursuing reputation and status and giving up her duty. After our fellowship, Chen Xin gained some understanding of herself, and her state improved somewhat. I felt so happy, and understood that if one acts and conducts themselves according to God's word, their heart will be at peace, and they can have normal relations with others.

Later on, I read more of God's word and began to understand the true essence behind traditional cultural practices of affability and approachability. Almighty God says: **"The essence behind good behavior such as being approachable and amiable can be described in one word: pretense. Such good behavior is not born of the words of God, nor as a result of practicing the truth or acting according to principle. What is it produced by? It comes from people's motives, schemes, from them pretending, putting on an act, being deceitful"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). **"As a group, all statements about good behavior are merely a way to put a bow on man's external behavior and image. 'Put a bow on' is phrasing it nicely; to put it more precisely, it is, in fact, a form of disguise, a way to use a false front to trick others into good feelings about oneself, to trick them into positive evaluations of oneself, to trick them into respect for oneself, whereas**

the dark side of one's heart, one's corrupt dispositions, and one's true face are all hidden and wrapped up nicely. We may also put it like this: What is hidden beneath the halo of these good behaviors are the corrupt true faces of each and every member of corrupt humanity. What is hidden is each and every member of evil humanity with an arrogant disposition, a deceitful disposition, a vicious disposition, and a disposition of being averse to the truth. It does not matter if a person's outward behavior is well-educated and sensible, or gentle and refined, nor whether they are amiable, approachable, respectful of the old and caring for the young, or any such thing—whichever of these they evince, it is no more than an external behavior that others can see. It cannot lead them through good behavior to knowledge of their nature essence. Though man looks well on the outward behaviors of being well-educated and sensible, gentle and refined, approachable, and amiable, such that the whole human world is well disposed toward them, what cannot be denied is that man's corrupt dispositions really exist beneath the cover of these good behaviors. Man's being averse to the truth, his resistance and rebelliousness against God, his nature essence of being averse to the words spoken by the Creator, and of resisting the Creator—these truly do exist there. There's nothing false about that. No matter how well someone fakes it, no matter how presentable or becoming their behaviors, how nicely or beautifully they package themselves, or how deceptive they are, what cannot be denied is that each and every corrupt person is filled with satanic disposition. Under the mask of these outward behaviors, they still resist and rebel against God, resist and rebel against the Creator. Of course, with these good behaviors as its cloak and its cover, mankind pours forth corrupt dispositions every day, every hour and moment, every minute and

second, in every affair, during which they live amid corrupt dispositions and sin. This is an uncontested fact. Despite man's presentable behaviors, pleasing words, and false exteriors, his corrupt disposition has not abated in the least, nor has it been changed at all due to those outward behaviors of his. On the contrary, it is because he has the cover of these outward good behaviors that his corrupt disposition pours constantly forth, and he never stops his steps toward doing evil and resisting God—and of course, governed by his vicious and wicked dispositions, his ambitions, desires, and extravagant requirements are constantly expanding and developing” (The Word, Vol. 6.

On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). In the past, I always thought being amiable and approachable were in line with normal human morals, that most people liked and approved of this behavior, and that these were positive things. As a child, I had seen my teacher being praised for her amiability and I always tried to be this kind of person. When I gained the approval and endorsement of those around me for being this way, it only reinforced this idea that I should behave amiably. This functioned as my own principle of conduct that was not only approved by God but liked by other people. Now, through the exposure of God's word, I understood that the essence behind being amiable and approachable is in fact a type of disguise, and that it's really a ruse to gain people's admiration and approval. It's deceptive. Thinking back to when I was a child, I had thought people should be amiable and approachable to each other, and so influenced by this idea, I never argued with others. Even if they hurt me, and I was angry and hated them inwardly, I would never let it show and always greet people with a smile. Actually, I made these compromises just to gain people's approval. I was a hypocrite and living a lie. I still interacted with people like this after believing in God. In everything I said and did, I was always

thinking about others' feelings and scared of offending them. I was afraid that they wouldn't have a good impression of me if I spoke honestly, so even if I saw somebody's problem, I didn't dare speak the truth or point it out. The church arranged for me to supervise this group's work, but I didn't play any real role. I always wanted to protect my image and status in others' eyes and gave no regard to the church's work. How could I be considered a good person? At this point, I saw that though I appeared amiable, loving, and considerate, inwardly, I was actually scheming. I had wanted to use this trick to gain others' admiration. I was such a slippery and deceitful person. I used to believe that amiable people were good, that they had good relationships with others, that they were liked, and that God approved of them. But now I saw that amiable people are just good at disguising themselves and that being amiable is not a principle of conduct. Living by this traditional cultural idea only makes people more selfish, despicable, slippery and deceitful, and that doing so runs counter to the truth, is an act of evil, and resists God!

Later on, I read another two passages of God's word, and I came to understand what good humanity is and learned of principles of conduct. Almighty God says: **"There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone speak well of you. This is not the standard. So, what is the standard? It is being able to submit to God and the truth. It is approaching one's duty and all manner of people, events, and things with principles and a sense of responsibility. This is plain for all to see; everyone is clear about this in their heart"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). **"What**

people should strive to achieve most is to make the words of God their basis, and the truth their criterion; only then can they live in the light and live out the likeness of a normal person. If you wish to live in the light, you should act according to the truth; you should be an honest person who says honest words and does honest things. What is fundamental is to have the truth principles in one's comportment; once people lose the truth principles, and focus only on good behavior, this inevitably gives rise to fakery and pretense. If there is no principle to people's comportment, then no matter how good their behavior is, they are hypocrites; they may be able to mislead others for a time, but they will never be trustworthy. Only when people act and comport themselves according to God's words do they have a true foundation. If they do not comport themselves according to God's words, and only focus on pretending to behave well, can they become good people as a result? Absolutely not. Good doctrines and behavior cannot change man's corrupt dispositions, and they cannot change his essence. Only the truth and the words of God can change people's corrupt dispositions, thoughts, and opinions, and become their life. ... So, what are the requirements and standards God has for people's speech and actions? (That they be constructive to people.) That is right. Most fundamentally, you must tell the truth, speak honestly, and benefit others. At the very least, your speech must edify people, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, constrict them, expose their weaknesses, or hurt them. This is the expression of normal humanity. It is humanity's virtue. Has God told you how loudly to speak? Has He required that you use standard language? Has He required that you make use of flowery rhetoric or a lofty, refined linguistic style? (No.) There's not a bit of any of those superficial,

hypocritical, false, nugatory things. All God's requirements are things of which normal humanity should be possessed, standards and principles for man's language and behavior. It doesn't matter where someone was born or what language they speak. In any case, the words you say—their verbiage and content—must be edifying to others. What does it mean, for them to be edifying? It means that others, having heard them, feel them to be true, and derive enrichment and help from them, and can understand the truth, and are no longer confused, nor susceptible to the misleading of others. So, God demands that people tell the truth, say what they think, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, or constrict others, or expose their weaknesses, or hurt them. Are these not the principles of speech? What does it mean to say one should not expose people's weaknesses? It means not to get dirt on other people. Do not hold on to their past mistakes or shortcomings in order to judge or condemn them. This is the least you should do. On the proactive side, how is constructive speech expressed? It is mainly encouraging, orienting, guiding, exhorting, understanding, and comforting. Also, in some special instances, it becomes necessary to directly expose other people's errors and prune them, so that they gain knowledge of the truth and desire to repent. Only then is the due effect achieved. This way of practicing is of great benefit to people. It is a real help to them, and it is constructive for them, is it not?" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). God's word made me understand the standard for measuring whether a person's humanity is good or bad. Truly good humanity is not a matter of walking the middle way, avoiding offending people, maintaining harmonious relations, or getting along with everyone, nor is it a matter of being amiable or approachable toward people. These are just outward behaviors, and no matter how well

they are performed, God does not approve of them. Only by interacting with people based on God's word adheres to principles. Only by approaching other people and one's duty with sincerity, being responsible, practicing the truth, and being an honest person can one be considered a person with truly good humanity. I used to always think that if I pointed out and exposed people's problems, I would offend people and my brothers and sisters would form a negative view of me, so when I spoke, I always considered how to make what I said easier to accept and how not to hurt people's feelings. I didn't think at all about whether doing this would be effective. Actually, interacting with people in this gentle way doesn't offend people and allows for your good image to be preserved, but it is of no benefit at all to other people or to the work of the church. In helping someone, you should at least bring benefit to them and be able to clearly point out their problems when you identify them. Even if this sometimes involves a critical tone that the other person may find difficult to accept initially, it can prompt them to reflect on themselves and make amends. I thought about how God's salvation work isn't comprised of just one method. God not only offers people comfort and exhortation, He also judges, chastises, and prunes people. This is a better method to save people. If I see somebody living with a corrupt disposition and just keep comforting and exhorting them, this is of no benefit to them, and it will be hard for them to recognize their corrupt disposition. I realized that helping people also requires principles, and must be based on that person's stature and unique background and situation. If a brother or sister has just started practicing and lacks professional skills, they should be helped more, but if they are relying on a corrupt disposition to do their duties and have already impacted the church's work, then they need to be corrected, exposed, and pruned. This is the fulfillment of responsibility and is beneficial to them.

Understanding these things, I told myself that I could no longer interact with others according to traditional culture, and that I had to practice according to God's word and requirements.

One day, I was inspecting the clearing materials the other two sisters had put together and I noticed that the examples lacked detail and needed to be supplemented and improved. These two sisters had been doing this work for quite some time, and if they had been more conscientious during inspection, these deviations shouldn't have occurred. It was clear that there was an issue in their attitudes toward their duty. I thought about how I had been afraid of offending people and wanted to preserve my relations with others, not daring to point out people's issues. This was not only of no benefit to people, but it also damaged the work of the church. I had to learn a lesson this time, practice the truth, and act according to principles, so I exposed their attitudes toward their duties and the essence and consequences of doing their duties in this way. One of the sisters later told me that although she could not accept being pruned at first, and felt that I had been too harsh, by reflecting on herself according to God's word, she gained some understanding of her problems, and also understood the importance of doing her duty in accordance with principles. She said that she had gained something from this experience of being pruned. These facts have shown me that for those who pursue the truth, being pruned can help them recognize their problems, do their duties more attentively, and reduce the number of deviations in their work. I have come to realize that only by acting and conducting oneself according to God's word and the truth can one live out normal humanity, and that this is beneficial to others, to oneself, and to the work of the church. Only God's words are the principles by which to act and conduct oneself!

67. After My Cancer Diagnosis

By Zheng Xin, China

In 1997, I came to believe in the Lord Jesus because I couldn't cure my chronic enteritis, and after finding the Lord, my illness improved a lot. Two years later, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, and have been doing my duties in the church ever since. Without even noticing it, my chronic enteritis completely healed. I became even more enthusiastic about doing my duties, and never shirked or refused any duties arranged by the church. Whether I was being obstructed or persecuted by my husband or the Communist Party was trying to arrest and persecute me, I never backed down and I never delayed my duties.

One day in May 2020, I felt a discomfort in my neck, like I was being strangled, so I went to the hospital for a check-up. I was diagnosed with a thyroid nodule. After the test, the doctor said, "It's not serious. Take some medication and come in for a check-up every six months. So long as there are no abnormalities, there's no need for treatment." Hearing the doctor say this, I thought, "It's not a major illness. So long as I try hard at my duties, God will protect me." So, I took my medication and continued doing my duties, and my illness seemed to lessen a bit. In 2023, my condition worsened. I felt pressure on my neck when I slept, and my breathing was labored. Speaking became difficult, and I couldn't talk without effort. After an examination, the doctor said my condition was progressing toward cancer and I needed surgery. I thought, "I'm currently doing leadership duties, and I'm busy from morning to night every day. God will protect me for my efforts and expenditures and it won't develop into cancer." So, I wasn't very afraid, and I underwent surgery. The surgery went well, and on the second day after surgery, I could get out of bed with the help of my

family. I felt this was God's care and protection and thanked God from the bottom of my heart.

Half a month later, I went to the hospital to pick up my medical records. I saw the records indicated a malignant tumor, a cancer, and I started to feel distressed, thinking, "So, I really do have cancer! Although I had surgery, it might come back or metastasize someday. Does that mean I'm about to die? Why didn't God protect me? I've suffered a lot in doing my duties for over twenty years. I've persisted in my duties despite many dangerous and difficult situations, so how could I get cancer? If I had known I would get cancer, I wouldn't have forsaken my family and job to do my duties. I thought I would be able to gain God's salvation and a good destination in the future, but now that I have a terminal illness and might die, that good destination is out of reach!" The more I thought about it, the more despair and distress I felt. I felt so pathetic, and I couldn't help but cry. Over the next few days, one word kept echoing through my mind—cancer. I felt so despondent. I couldn't eat or sleep, all my bones ached, and my arms were numb. I came before God to pray, telling Him about my state, hoping He'd help me understand His intention. Then I read God's words on how to deal with illness. I read a passage of God's words and understood His intention a little more. Almighty God says: **"When God arranges for someone to get an illness, whether major or minor, His purpose in doing so is not to make you appreciate the ins and outs of being sick, the harm the illness does to you, the hardships and difficulties the illness causes you, and all the myriad feelings the illness causes you to feel—His purpose is not for you to appreciate sickness through being sick. Rather, His purpose is for you to learn the lessons from sickness, to learn how to feel for God's intentions, to know the corrupt dispositions you reveal and the wrong attitudes you adopt**

toward God when you're sick, and to learn how to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, so that you can achieve true submission to God and be able to stand firm in your testimony—this is absolutely key. God wishes to save you and cleanse you through sickness. What about you does He wish to cleanse? He wishes to cleanse all your extravagant desires and demands toward God, and even cleanse the various plans, judgments, and schemes you make at all costs to survive and live. God does not ask you to make plans, He does not ask you to judge, and He does not allow you to have any extravagant desires toward Him; He requires only that you submit to Him and, in your practice and experience of submitting, to know your own attitude toward sickness, and to know your attitude toward these bodily conditions He gives to you, as well as your own personal wishes. When you come to know these things, you can then appreciate how beneficial it is for you that God has arranged the circumstances of the illness for you or that He has given you these bodily conditions; and you can appreciate just how helpful they are to changing your disposition, to you attaining salvation, and to your life entry. That is why, when illness comes calling, you must not always be wondering how you can escape it or flee from it or reject it” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). After reading God's words, my heart felt brighter. It turned out that this illness was not God revealing and eliminating me, but rather that He was cleansing my corrupt disposition and saving me. But I did not seek God's intention, and thought that getting this illness meant God was revealing and eliminating me. I lived in despair, arguing with and complaining to God, and even regretting my previous efforts and expenditures. I saw that I had been truly unconscionable! Now I understood that whether my illness would return or metastasize, and to what extent it

would develop, all contained God's intention. I could no longer misunderstand God. I had to seek the truth to resolve my issues.

I recalled a passage of God's words about how to face death correctly, so I found it and read it. Almighty God says: **"The matter of death has the same nature as other matters. It is not up to people to choose for themselves, much less can it be changed by the will of man. Death is the same as any other important event in life: It is entirely under the predestination and sovereignty of the Creator. If someone were to beg for death, they may not necessarily die; if they were to beg to live, they may not necessarily live. All this is under the sovereignty and predestination of God, and it is changed and decided by the authority of God, by God's righteous disposition, and by God's sovereignty and arrangements. Therefore, say you contract a serious illness, a potentially fatal serious illness, you will not necessarily die—who decides whether you will die or not? (God.) God decides. And since God decides and people cannot decide such a thing, what are people feeling anxious and distressed about? ... What people ought to do when facing the tremendously important matter of death is not get distressed, or fret over it, or fear it, but what? People should wait, yes? (Yes.) Right? Does waiting mean waiting for death? Waiting to die when facing death? Is that right? (No, people should face it positively and submit.) That's right, it doesn't mean waiting for death. Do not be petrified of death, and do not use all your energy thinking about death. Do not think all day long, 'Will I die? When will I die? What will I do after I die?' Just don't think about it. Some people say, 'Why not think about it? Why not think about it when I'm about to die?' Because it is not known whether you will die or not, and it is not known whether God will allow you to die—these things are unknown. Specifically, it is**

unknown when you will die, where you will die, what time you will die, or how your body will feel when you die. By racking your brains thinking about and pondering things you don't know and feeling anxious and worried about them, doesn't that make you foolish? Since it makes you foolish, you shouldn't rack your brains over these things"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). After reading God's words, my heart felt even brighter. Each of us will experience death, and what illness we get and when we die are all predestined by God. A person's life and death are not influenced by external factors, but rather depend only on God's sovereignty and predestination. God has predestined the length of each person's life, and this has nothing to do with their physical condition or whether they have a serious illness. I thought of my mother, who was always healthy but ended up with hemiplegia and passed away within a few years. But a neighbor of mine, who I heard had been in poor health since she was forty, was often sick, unable to work in the fields, and only able to cook and do housework, is now in her nineties. This shows that a person's health and lifespan are already predestined by God, and even with a serious illness, if it's not a person's time according to God's predestination, they won't die. Thinking about this, I was able to calmly face my own illness.

I then read more of God's words: **"Tell Me, who among the billions of people all across the world is so blessed to hear so many of God's words, to understand so many of the truths of life, and understand so many mysteries? Who among them can personally receive God's guidance, God's provision, His care and protection? Who is so blessed? Very few. Therefore, you few being able to live in God's house today, receive His salvation, and receive His provision, makes it all worth it even if you were to die right now. You are so very blessed, isn't that**

right? (Yes.) Looking at it from this perspective, people should not be scared stiff by the matter of death, nor should they be constrained by it. Even though you haven't enjoyed any of the glory and wealth of the world, yet you have received the pity of the Creator and heard so many of God's words—isn't this blissful? (It is.) No matter how many years you live in this life, it's all worth it and you have no regrets, because you have been constantly performing your duty in God's work, you have understood the truth, understood the mysteries of life, and understood the path and goals you should pursue in life—you have gained so much! You have lived a worthwhile life!" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). That someone as insignificant as me could accept God's work in the last days is God's exaltation. Believing in God for over twenty years, I had enjoyed so much watering and provision from God's words and God's care and protection, but when I fell ill, I still misunderstood and complained, argued with God, and resisted Him. I was completely lacking in testimony and I had become a mark of shame. I was in great pain, thinking that even after believing in God for so many years, I still had not entered into much of the truth reality, and that if I died, I would leave only regrets behind. Since I was still alive, I felt that I must earnestly pursue the truth, and no matter how long I lived, I must cherish every day I had, and fulfill the duty of a created being, leaving no regrets.

Later, I read another passage of God's words and was deeply moved. Almighty God says: **"Many who follow God are only concerned with how to gain blessings or stave off disaster. ... Such people only have one simple aim in following God, and that aim is to receive blessings. Such people cannot be bothered to pay heed to anything else that does not directly involve this aim. To them, there is no goal more legitimate than believing in God to receive blessings—it is the very value of their faith.**

If something does not contribute to this aim, they remain completely unmoved by it. This is the case with most people who believe in God today. Their aim and intention seem legitimate, because as they believe in God, they also expend for God, dedicate themselves to God, and perform their duty. They give up their youth, forsake family and career, and even spend years away from home busying themselves. For the sake of their ultimate goal, they change their own interests, their outlook on life, and even the direction they seek; yet they cannot change the aim of their belief in God. ... For the moment, let us not discuss how much these people have given. Their behavior, however, is highly worthy of our dissection. Apart from the benefits that are so closely associated with them, could there be any other reasons why people who never understand God would give so much for Him? In this, we discover a previously unidentified problem: Man's relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is akin to the relationship between employee and employer. The employee works only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such a relationship, only transaction. There is no loving or being loved, only charity and mercy. There is no understanding, only suppressed indignation and deception. There is no intimacy, only an **uncrossable chasm**" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God's Management). God's words exposed exactly my state. After believing in God and seeing that He healed my illness, I forsook my family and career to do my duty, and even when my family persecuted me and there was a danger of being arrested, I was not affected. But when I learned that I had cancer, and my hopes for blessings were shattered, I argued with God, complained that He had not protected me, and regretted

my previous expenditures and efforts, and I didn't want to pray to God or read His words anymore. Only then did I see that my relationship with God was purely transactional. I wanted to exchange my sacrifices and efforts for a good destination. I was trying to deceive and use God. I was so selfish and despicable! A person with humanity would not misunderstand or complain about God when faced with trials but would seek God's intention, and even in pain, they would still stand in their proper position as a created being and let God orchestrate them as He wishes. But looking at myself, I took all the grace and blessings God gave me for granted, and when one thing didn't satisfy my demands, I held God accountable. I truly lacked humanity and didn't deserve to live. Even if God destroyed me, it would be His righteousness! But God still gave me a chance to repent, using His words to enlighten and guide me to reflect on myself. I could no longer misunderstand or complain about God. I had to pursue the truth and do my duties well.

Later, I read another passage of God's words and found some paths of practice. Almighty God says: **"There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he receives blessings or suffers misfortune. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. Receiving blessings refers to when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. Suffering misfortune refers to when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment; they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they receive blessings or suffer misfortune, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues**

God, should do. You should not do your duty only to receive blessings, and you should not refuse to act for fear of suffering misfortune. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness. It is through the process of doing his duty that man is gradually changed, and it is through this process that he demonstrates his loyalty. As such, the more you are able to do your duty, the more truth you shall receive, and the more real your expression shall become. Those who merely go through the motions in doing their duty and do not seek the truth shall be eliminated in the end, for such people do not do their duty in the practice of truth, and do not practice truth in the performance of their duty. They are those who remain unchanged and will suffer misfortune. Not only are their expressions impure, but everything they express is evil" (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). From God's words, I understood that performing one's duty has nothing to do with receiving blessings or suffering disasters, and that it is perfectly natural and justified for created beings to do their duties, and regardless of whether they have a good outcome or destination, or whether they can be blessed, they must do their duties. Additionally, blessings are what people enjoy as a result of pursuing the truth and achieving a change in disposition while doing their duty and when they are eventually saved by God. If a person's corrupt disposition does not change, they will be punished in the end. In light of God's words, I saw just how absurd my views were. I always thought that so long as I suffered more, sacrificed and expended myself for God, I would be saved, and receive the good destination God grants to people. This was just wishful thinking on my part. If I only did my duty without examining the impurities in it, didn't focus on

pursuing the truth, and my corrupt disposition never changed, and when I didn't receive blessings, I even held God accountable, in the end I'd be punished for resisting God. Seeing this, I realized how great danger I was in. If I continued on this path, I would be eliminated without even knowing why! I sincerely thanked God for allowing this illness to help me see the wrong path I was on in my faith and turn around in time. I also understood that believing in God should not be about pursuing blessings, but about pursuing the truth and dispositional change, and submitting to all of God's arrangements. Realizing these things, my heart felt instantly relieved and liberated, and no longer constrained by illness or death. If my illness returned or metastasized, I was willing to submit to God's orchestrations. Regardless of whether my illness could be cured or whether I could receive blessings in the future, I would try my best to do my duties well. After that, I started working with brothers and sisters to resolve difficulties and problems in spreading the gospel, and we achieved some results. More than ten days later, I went for another health check-up, and unexpectedly, all the indicators were normal.

I gained a lot from this illness. I saw my true stature, and I saw that I had forsaken my family and career all these years for the sake of blessings, and all for the sake of gains. My heart was truly intransigent! God had given me so much grace and blessings, and had worked constantly to save me, but because of this one thing not satisfying my demands, I argued with God and held Him accountable. God had paid so much for me and yet couldn't get my true heart in return! Thinking of this, I felt deeply indebted to God. But at the same time, I was very grateful to God, because if not for this illness, I would never have recognized and reflected on myself, I'd have continued trying to deceive, extort and make transactions with Him. Without God revealing this, I would still think I could be saved. But now I

see that my stature is pathetically small and far from being saved! I need to start over, but this time, with reason. No matter how God tries me in the future, I must submit to His orchestrations, pursue the truth, and seek a change in my disposition.

68. How to Treat Parental Kindness

By Jian Xi, China

When I was young, I had a weak constitution and often fell ill. Sometimes, my parents would rush me to the clinic in the middle of the night. They would knock on the door of the doctor's home late at night, and no matter how bad his tone or how poor his attitude, my parents were always willing to endure it. It was all so that I could receive prompt treatment. They feared my condition would worsen, so they stayed overnight to look after me. Later on, I grew a bit older, and when I saw that my parents were exhausted after work every day, I felt sorry for them. But they always said to me, "We need to earn more money to give you a better life, and to have the money to buy you what you like." I thought that my parents had done so much for me, and I made up my mind to be filial to them and not let them get too tired. When my parents went to work, I would clean the house, and I learned to do laundry and cook. Every time my parents came home and saw that everything was in order, they said in a very pleased voice, "We didn't raise this child in vain!" Hearing these words, I felt very happy. I thought that it was quite worthwhile to make things a bit easier for my parents and give them a little more time to rest.

Later on, the three of us began believing in God, and I went to another place to do my duty. My mother was very supportive of me doing my duty, and although my father wasn't as happy about it, he also respected my choice. Later, the circumstances became increasingly adverse, and many brothers and sisters were arrested while doing their duties. One time, I went home, and my father said to me anxiously, "We have raised you for so many years, and we've never asked that you have too bright a future; we just want you to stay by our side. But you left home to do your duty, and we usually

can't see you when we want to. Now these circumstances are quite adverse; if you are arrested down the road, what can I do? What will come of your future?" My father's words surprised me a lot. How could he say something like that? If I gave up on doing my duties because I was afraid of being arrested, then was I not betraying God and becoming a deserter? I said to my father gravely, "Dad, you should not stop me from doing my duty. I'm all grown up now, and leaving home to do my duty is a choice I made after careful consideration. You should support me!" He was very angry, and said, "I raised you for all these years, and you leave just like that. I guess I see it clearly now. I have raised an ungrateful wretch!" When I heard these words, I was very distressed, and I couldn't keep my eyes from welling up with tears. I thought of when I fell ill as a kid, and how my father would hold me all night without closing his eyes, all just to take care of me, and how my parents would work hard to make money and provide a good life for me. But now, not only was I unfilial to them, I couldn't even keep them company. I hadn't fulfilled my obligation as their daughter at all. Looking at my angry father from behind as he went away, I felt guilty; I wanted to be together with my parents and spend more time with them. But at this time, I thought of God. Back when I didn't believe in God, I often felt empty inside, and I didn't know why I existed in this world. After believing in God, through reading His words I came to understand that it is God who created humans, and it is God who gave me this breath. I have my own mission in this world. Only then did I find the value in my own existence, and I no longer felt empty and lost. Having enjoyed such great love from God, I couldn't be without a conscience and couldn't give up doing my duty. At that point, I gained the strength to rebel against my flesh, and I went out to continue doing my duty.

In 2019, I was arrested while doing my duty one time. During the interrogation, the police brought my uncle to the detention center, and said that he was my biological father. They told me to explain the church's situation without delay, so that I could go home and reunite with my birth parents. I didn't say anything. In the end, my uncle spent money to have me released from custody. The police suspected that I was following my parents in believing in God, and they did not permit me to go home or come into contact with them. They only let my uncle take me to another place. Because my uncle bailed me out, the police called to intimidate him almost every day. My uncle believed the rumors he heard from the Communist Party, and he tried to stop me from believing in God. He said, "You're a grown-up, you should know better. Your mother and I, as well as your adoptive parents, can't stand being tormented like this. Because you believe in God, the police call every day to harass us. I'm so old already. When the police reprimanded me, I still shamefully put in a good word for you. Do you know how hard this is for me?" Seeing my biological father and my adoptive parents getting tied up in my affairs, I was in great pain. People in ancient times used to say: "Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else." Being filial to one's parents and making them worry less is something that all children should do. My adoptive parents raised me for all these years, and my biological parents were blackmailed into paying 140,000 yuan to the police to bail me out. I felt such guilt inside. Before, I was doing my duties and could not be by their side to look after them, and now I was arrested for believing in God, involving them in my suffering. I have not done any of the things that children should do; all I have brought upon them is burdens. The more I thought about it, the worse I felt, and I even thought, "Is it true that my family troubles will only subside if I give up believing in God? Is it true that only if I died would police then stop keeping a close

watch over my family, and would my parents no longer be harassed and humiliated?” At that time, I felt extremely oppressed. I knew that I had developed thoughts of betraying God, and I thought that I owed Him, but as soon as I thought of how my adoptive and biological parents had been tied up in my trouble, I was full of guilt inside. I was being pulled from both sides, and I was never able to be calm.

During that time, my uncle and aunt forced me to start working in order to stop me from believing in God. They also had my colleagues monitor me, and if I so much as came home late, they would interrogate me, “Where were you? Who were you with?” My aunt even got on her knees and begged, and also refused to eat in order to pressure me to give up believing in God. Faced with such circumstances, I felt like I was about to break down. I felt that I had no freedom and especially no personal rights in this home. I felt as if my throat was being clutched and I was gasping for breath. I wanted to resist, and to argue with them, “Why do you treat me like this just because I believe in God?” But as soon as I thought of how they were involved in this trouble because of me, and how they had been fined so much money, the resistance in my heart disappeared. Instead, I thought that it was I who was unfilial, that they had no choice but to treat me like this, and that the parent is always right. Especially when I thought of how I hadn’t been by my parents’ side to keep them company and show filial piety these last few years, I felt even more like I had let them down. During that period, I exhausted all means to make up what I owed to my parents. I bought them healthcare products, took on all the housework, and did all I could to work and make money. I would gladly endure the hardship of working overtime until late at night every day. I just wanted to make more money and bring them some more enjoyment. Before I knew it, God and I grew further and further apart. After a period of time, the police called

and said they were going to come take me away, and that they wanted to hear from me about the church's situation. I knew that if I continued to stay at home, there was a chance I would be arrested, but I also thought that if I left, I didn't know when I could return. Besides, if the police couldn't find me, would they take away my parents and my uncle and aunt instead? If this was truly the case, then how unfilial I would be. All I could think about was the words of my parents: My aunt wanted me to stay by her side and wanted to have a good family. My uncle said that I was a grown-up and was sensible, and that I had to be considerate of them. My father said he wanted me to show filial piety to him and did not want to raise an ungrateful child. At that moment, I felt like everything was falling apart. At that time, I prayed to God, "God, since the police are going to arrest me, I can't stay at home. But I think that if I left, I would be unfilial and without a conscience. I am in great pain. God, how should I choose? Please guide me!" After praying, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"Were it not for the Creator's predestination and His guidance, a life newly born into this world would not know where to go or where to stay, would have no relations, belong nowhere, and have no real home. But because of the Creator's meticulous arrangements, this new life has a place to stay, parents, a place it belongs, and relatives, and hence that life sets out on the course of its journey. Throughout this process, the materialization of this new life is determined by the Creator's plans, and everything it will come to possess is bestowed upon it by the Creator. From a free-floating body with nothing to its name, it gradually becomes a flesh-and-blood, visible, tangible human being, one of God's creations, who thinks, breathes, and senses warm and cold; who can participate in all the usual activities of a created being in the material world; and who will undergo all the things a created human being must experience in**

life. The predetermination of a person's birth by the Creator means that He will bestow upon that person all things necessary for survival; and, likewise, the fact that a person is born means they will receive all things necessary for survival from the Creator, and from that point on, they will live in another form, provided for by the Creator and subject to the Creator's sovereignty" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). From God's words, I understood that I am just a solitary, free-floating body. It was God who arranged a family and parents for me; it was God who ruled over this. But my being born into this world was not merely to enjoy familial warmth and show filial piety to my parents, but more for me to assume the responsibility and mission expected of created beings. Now, I was thinking of giving up my own duty in order to satisfy my parents. This is not what God wanted to see. God supplied me with everything; I could not give up my duty and betray Him. After that, I left home to do my duty.

Soon after, I learned that since the police could not arrest me, they took my uncle instead. They let it be known that they would only release him when I returned. In that instant, I felt a bit faint, and thought that I had owed a debt to my uncle. I badly wanted to go back and replace him in custody. I was not in the mood to do my duty, and all I thought about was the voices and faces of my family members. I thought that their misfortune was all because of me, especially when I thought of how my uncle had been arrested; I didn't know how the police would treat him. Would they beat him? The more I thought, the more it pained me, and I prayed to God in my heart, "God, today I am faced with these kinds of circumstances, and I don't know how to experience them. My heart is in pain, and I have no heart for doing my duty. I don't want to live in such a state. God, what should I do? I beg You to guide me, to make me turn this state around." After praying, I

read a passage of God's words: "Some people abandon their families because they believe in God and perform their duties. They become famous because of this and the government frequently searches their house, harasses their parents, and even threatens their parents to hand them over. All their neighbors talk about them, saying, 'This person has no conscience. They don't care for their elderly parents. Not only are they unfilial, but they also cause so much trouble for their parents. They are an unfilial child!' Are any of these words in line with the truth? (No.) But aren't all these words considered right in the eyes of the nonbelievers? Among nonbelievers, they think this is the most legitimate and reasonable way of looking at it, and that it is in line with human ethics, and in accordance with the standards of human conduct. No matter how much content is included in these standards, such as how to show filial respect to parents, how to take care of them in their old age and arrange their funerals, or how much to repay them, and regardless of whether these standards accord with the truth or not, in the eyes of nonbelievers, they are positive things, they are positive energy, they are right, and they are considered irreproachable within all groups of people. Among nonbelievers, these are the standards for people to live by, and you have to do these things to be an adequately good person in their hearts. Before you believed in God and understood the truth, didn't you also firmly believe that such conduct was being a good person? (Yes.) Moreover, you also used these things to evaluate yourself and restrain yourself, and you required yourself to be this kind of person. If you wanted to be a good person, you must have surely included these things in your standards of conduct: how to be filial to your parents, how to make them feel less worried, how to bring them honor and credit, and how to bring glory to your ancestors. These were

the standards of conduct in your heart and the direction of your conduct. However, after you listened to God's words and His sermons, your viewpoint began to change, and you understood that you have to forsake everything to perform your duty as a created being, and that God requires people to conduct themselves this way. Before you were certain that performing your duty as a created being was the truth, you thought you should be filial to your parents, but you also felt you should perform your duty as a created being, and you felt conflicted inside. Through the continuous watering and shepherding of God's words, you gradually came to understand the truth, and it was then that you realized that performing your duty as a created being is perfectly natural and justified. Up until this day, many people have been able to accept the truth and completely abandon the standards of conduct from man's traditional notions and imaginings. When you completely let go of these things, you are no longer constrained by words of judgment and condemnation from nonbelievers when you follow God and perform your duty as a created being, and you could cast them off easily" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Truth Reality?). After reading God's words, I was very moved. Much of the time, I was judging right and wrong according to worldly ethics, but this was not in line with the truth. My life originates from God; it is God who brought my soul into this world and arranged a family and parents for me, who selected me to accept His salvation in the last days, and who gave me the opportunity to do my duty as a created being. This is the love and grace of God. But because my uncle was arrested by the police, I thought that this hardship was brought upon my family due to my belief in God, and I wanted to abandon my duty and betray Him. How stupid I was! To this day, all that my family has been subjected to was brought about by the demon,

the Communist Party. They opposed God and persecuted Christians, harassed my family and arrested my uncle, and made it so that my parents did not spend a single day in peace. The Communist Party was the real culprit! But I did not hate the Communist Party, and thought that it was my belief in God that got my family in trouble. I truly could not tell right from wrong. Now, I understood that it was perfectly natural and justified for me to follow God and do my duty. This is the conscience and reason that people should have! I thought of another passage of God's words: **"The amount an individual must suffer and the distance they must walk on their path is ordained by God, and no one can really help anyone else"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). No matter whether someone believes in God or not, every person's life is in God's hands and is controlled and ruled over by God. God has predetermined how much each person will suffer, and we cannot change it. My parents and adoptive parents are also in God's hands; I should hand them over to God. And then, I silently prayed to God, willing to entrust everything to God and submit to His arrangement. After that, I threw myself into doing my duty.

Afterward, I read a passage of God's words that brought me further understanding of my own state. Almighty God says: **"Due to the conditioning of Chinese traditional culture, in Chinese people's traditional notions they believe that one must observe filial piety toward their parents. Whoever does not observe filial piety is an unfilial child. These ideas have been instilled in people since childhood, and they are taught in practically every household, as well as in every school and in society at large. When a person's head has been filled with such stuff, they think, 'Filial piety is more important than anything. If I weren't to observe it, I wouldn't be a good person—I'd be an unfilial child and I'd be denounced by society. I'd be a person**

who lacks conscience.’ Is this view correct? People have seen so many truths expressed by God—has God demanded that one show filial piety toward their parents? Is this one of the truths that believers in God must understand? No, it is not. God has only fellowshiped on some principles. By what principle do God’s words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God’s will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. If your parents do not believe in God, if they know full well that faith in God is the right path, and that it can lead to salvation, yet remain unreceptive, then there is no doubt that they are people who are averse to and hate the truth, and that they are people who resist and hate God—and God naturally abhors and hates them. Could you abhor such parents? They oppose and revile God—in which case they are surely demons and Satans. Could you hate and curse them? These are all real questions. If your parents prevent you from believing in God, how should you treat them? As is asked by God, you should love what God loves, and hate what God hates. During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, ‘Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?’ ‘For whoever shall follow the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.’ These words already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God’s words are even more clear: ‘Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.’ These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to grasp their true meaning. If a person is someone who denies and opposes God, who is cursed by God, but they are a

parent or relative of yours, they don't appear to be an evil person as far as you can tell, and they treat you well, then you might find yourself unable to hate that person, and might even remain in close contact with them, your relationship unchanged. Hearing that God hates such people will trouble you, and you are unable to stand on the side of God and ruthlessly reject them. You're always constrained by feelings, and you cannot fully let go of them. What is the reason for this? This happens because your feelings are too strong, and they hinder you from practicing the truth. That person is good to you, so you can't bring yourself to hate them. You could only hate them if they did hurt you. Would that hatred be in line with the truth principles? Also, you're bound by traditional notions, thinking that they are a parent or relative, so if you hate them, you would be scorned by society and reviled by public opinion, condemned as unfilial, without a conscience, and not even human. You think you would suffer divine condemnation and punishment. Even if you want to hate them, your conscience won't let you. Why does your conscience function this way? It's because a way of thinking has been sown within you since you were a child, through the inheritance of your family, the education given to you by your parents, and the indoctrination of traditional culture. This way of thinking is rooted very deeply in your heart, and it makes you mistakenly believe that filial piety is perfectly natural and justified, and that anything inherited from your ancestors is always good. You learned it first and it remains dominant, creating a great stumbling block and disturbance in your faith and acceptance of the truth, leaving you unable to put God's words into practice, and to love what God loves, hate what God hates" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). From

God's words, I understood that Satan used all kinds of means to corrupt people. For example, the guidance of our parents, the education of our schools, and the opinions of people around us made us believe that because our parents raised us, we must repay their kindness, and that this is what it means to have humanity and a conscience. Otherwise, we would lack a conscience, be unfilial, and be spurned by others. From a young age, I was instilled with these ideas and views, such as "Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else" and "The parent is always right." Because I had these traditional ideas and views inside me, when I left home to do my duty and couldn't take care of my parents, I blamed myself and felt guilty. I wasn't in the mood to do my duty, and I regretted going away to do it. When I saw my uncle spend 140,000 yuan to have me released, and when I learned that he was harassed and arrested by the police, I thought that my family had become involved in this trouble all because I believed in God, and I wanted to give up on doing my duty and betray God, even wanting to take my own life. My uncle and aunt controlled my freedom and monitored my whereabouts to keep me from believing in God. My aunt even got down on her knees and stopped eating to force me to give up my belief in God. I was in great pain and felt extremely oppressed. But I did not dare and was not willing to resist them. I believed that "The parent is always right" and that as their child, to make them suffer such hardships, to the point that my aunt got on her knees and begged me, meant that I was too unfilial. Even though, at that time, I knew that obeying them and not doing my duty would amount to betraying God, and that I would lose my chance to gain the truth, I lacked the strength to resist them. Although I never said that I would stop believing in God, my various behaviors throughout most of that year showed that I bowed down to Satan and traditional thinking. All that was left were transgressions and stains; I betrayed God time and time again. Now, I saw

clearly that although being filial to one's parents was a positive thing, it was not the truth, and that such a viewpoint would make me lack principles, and even unable to tell good from evil or right from wrong. My uncle and aunt tried to stop me from believing in God, covertly imprisoning me, and said blasphemous words about Him. They even said that as long as they were living, and unless they died, they would not permit me to believe in God, that if I kept God, I would lose my family, and if I kept my family, I would lose God. Their essence was hostile to the truth and to God. Also, my adoptive father was always holding me back, playing the negative role of Satan's lackey. I should have discerned them, loving what God loves and hating what He hates. But I believed that "Filial piety is a virtue to be held above all else," and such traditional thinking was leading me to rebel against God. I almost gave up on doing my duty and betrayed Him. I now understood that the ideas and views that Satan instills in people all carry cunning schemes. They are misleading and harming people.

Later, I read this passage of God's words: **"So, regarding people, no matter whether your parents looked after you meticulously or took great care of you, in any case, they were just fulfilling their responsibility and obligation. Regardless of the reason why they raised you, it was their responsibility—because they gave birth to you, they should take responsibility for you. Based on this, can everything that your parents did for you be considered kindness? It can't, right? (That's right.) Your parents fulfilling their responsibility to you doesn't count as kindness, so if they fulfill their responsibility toward a flower or a plant, watering it and fertilizing it, does that count as kindness? (No.) That is even further from being kindness. Flowers and plants grow better outside—if they're planted in the ground, with wind, sun, and rainwater, they thrive. They don't grow as well when they're**

planted in a pot indoors as they do outside, but wherever they are, they're living, right? No matter where they are, it has been ordained by God. You are a living person, and God takes responsibility for every life, enabling it to survive, and to follow the law that all created beings abide by. But as a person, you live in the environment that your parents raise you in, so you should grow up and exist in that environment. You living in that environment is on a larger scale due to God's ordination; on a smaller scale, it is due to your parents raising you, right? In any case, by raising you your parents are fulfilling a responsibility and an obligation. Raising you into an adult is their obligation and responsibility, and this cannot be called kindness. If it cannot be called kindness, then is it not something that you ought to enjoy? (It is.) This is a kind of right that you should enjoy. You should be raised by your parents, because before you reach adulthood, the role that you play is that of a child being brought up. Therefore, your parents are just fulfilling a kind of responsibility toward you, and you are just receiving it, but you are certainly not receiving grace or kindness from them. For any living creature, bearing and looking after children, reproducing, and raising the next generation is a kind of responsibility. For example, birds, cows, sheep, and even tigers have to take care of their offspring after they reproduce. There are no living creatures that do not raise their offspring. It's possible that there are some exceptions, but there are not many of them. It's a natural phenomenon in the existence of living creatures, it's an instinct for living creatures, and it cannot be attributed to kindness. They are just abiding by a law that the Creator set out for animals and for mankind. Therefore, your parents raising you isn't a kind of kindness. Based on this, it can be said that your parents are not your creditors. They are fulfilling their responsibility to

you. No matter how much effort and money they spend on you, they should not ask you to recompense them, because this is their responsibility as parents. Since it is a responsibility and an obligation, it should be free, and they should not ask for compensation. By raising you, your parents were just fulfilling their responsibility and obligation, and this should be unpaid, and it should not be a transaction. So, you do not need to approach your parents or handle your relationship with them according to the idea of recompensing them” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the

Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (17)). From His words, I understood that parents giving birth to, raising, and meticulously caring for their children is not kindness, but rather their responsibility and obligation as parents. It's just like how God said that if one moves flowers and grass from outside into their home, then that person has the responsibility to take care of, water, and fertilize them; this is their responsibility. Another example is that cats, dogs, and other such animals reproduce and take care of their children, which is instinctual for them. Human parents are the same with their children. When a child is not yet an adult, raising and looking after them is a responsibility and obligation that all parents should fulfill, and it is also an instinct given to people by God. Children do not owe their parents because of it. I always believed that the meticulous care of my adoptive parents was a kindness that must be paid back, and that I must repay my uncle and aunt for giving birth to me. Now, I understood that this breath was given to me by God, and not by my parents. If God did not give me this breath, then even if my parents had given birth to me, I would have just been a stillborn fetus. My parents brought me up and looked after me, giving me a good environment for growth. This is what they should do as parents, and it is what God has predetermined and arranged. Also, during my period of growth, it was God who truly cared for me and protected me. Just like how

one time after school, I rode my e-bike too fast and couldn't stop, and I was crammed between stone slabs and a large truck. At the time, the truck was moving forward at full speed, and I was also forced to keep riding my e-bike forward. All along, my foot was stuck between the truck and my e-bike, rubbing against them nonstop. When the road widened, my e-bike finally came to a stop. It was really nerve-wracking. At the time, many people had sweaty palms and thought that I would certainly be seriously injured. I also thought that I certainly wouldn't be able to walk on that foot. I was stunned to see that there was not a single wound on my body. I really experienced firsthand how God is always silently caring for and protecting me. Also, when my uncle and aunt paid 140,000 yuan to the police for me to be released, I thought that this was the greatest kindness I could receive, and that I must pay them back. Now, I understood that even though it appeared that it was my uncle and aunt who paid this money, in the background it was God who ruled over and arranged this. During that time, my uncle and aunt made money very easily, so easily that even they themselves were surprised. Actually, now that I thought about it, if God had not blessed them to make all that money, then where would the money to release me have come from? I remembered that God said: **“Should anyone do us a good turn, we should accept it from God—in particular our parents, who gave birth to and raised us; this is all arranged by God. God holds sovereignty over all; man is just a tool for service”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). On the surface, it was my parents who raised me, and my uncle and aunt who paid to have me released. But from the perspective of the truth, all of this was ruled over and arranged by God. I am not indebted to them. I do not need to use my life to settle this debt at the expense of my salvation. I can show filial piety to them, but only within

the scope of my own powers. Under suitable circumstances and conditions, I can keep them company and show them filial piety. But if the conditions aren't met, I don't need feel reproached. I just need to do my duties well. If I gave up on God and the truth in order to show filial piety to my parents, then even though people would call me a filial daughter, I would have betrayed the Creator, which is a great rebellion and lacks humanity! In fact, the one I truly owed was not my parents, but God. It was God's care and protection that allowed me to make it to today; He is the one I should thank the most! So, I prayed to God, "God, what my parents experience and how the police treat them is in Your hands now. I cannot change anything, and I am willing to hand them over to You. I only want to peacefully do my duty as a created being and properly experience Your work."

From then on, I felt a bit more at ease in relation to the circumstances that my family encountered, and I began to contemplate how to do my duty well. Before long, I got in contact with my mother. She wrote a letter sharing her experience with me. She said that experiencing such circumstances strengthened her resolve to pursue the truth, and told me not to worry about what happened at home and to focus on pursuing the truth and fulfilling my duty. She also said that the police saw that I had still not come home, and they knew that detaining my uncle was useless, so they let him go. At that moment, I was very emotional. I became acutely aware that the circumstances I had encountered up until now had God's intention in them, and that they were meant to reverse my view on things and clean the impurities inside me. This is God taking responsibility for my life! Thank God!

69. In Peril, I No Longer Abandon My Duty

By Ye Ping, China

In October 2021, I began doing my duty as a leader in the Daybreak Church. On the night of December 10, I received a letter saying that gospel deacon Yang Hui and his family had been arrested by the police on the afternoon of the 8th. I suddenly realized that the next morning, Brother Li Zhi, one of my partners, was scheduled to meet with Yang Hui and others. I discussed this with my other partner Sister Zhang Xin, and we decided to quickly inform Li Zhi about Yang Hui's arrest the following morning. Zhang Xin went the next day, but by noon on the 12th, she still hadn't returned. I became anxious and fearful, worrying that Zhang Xin might also have been arrested. If they were all caught, many brothers and sisters would be implicated, and the church's books of God's words would be in danger. If we didn't hurry to transfer the books before the police conducted a search, the loss would be significant, and my transgression would be severe. Thinking about these things made me even more afraid. I kept praying to God in my heart, "Oh God! My stature is too small, and I don't know how to get through this situation. Please enlighten and guide me, and give me the faith and courage to deal with this aftermath properly." After praying, I immediately wrote a letter to arrange a meeting with two sisters to discuss transferring the books of God's words. As I was about to leave, the sister who was hosting me anxiously said, "You can't leave! If you go out and don't come back, what will happen to the church's work?" Seeing her fearful expression made me even more worried: "They still haven't returned yet, so they must have been arrested. If I go out, will someone follow me? What if I really don't come back?" In my heart, I kept praying to God and I thought of God's words: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who**

cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free. If man harbors timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God. Satan is trying in every way possible to send us its thoughts. We should at every moment pray for God to illuminate and enlighten us, at every moment rely on God to purge Satan's poison from within us, practice within our spirit at every moment how to come close to God, and let God have dominion over our whole being" (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). Now that the church was facing arrests, it was my responsibility and urgent duty to protect the brothers and sisters and the books of God's words. My fear of being arrested was a thought sent by Satan. I had to avoid falling into Satan's trap. If I hid out of fear of being arrested and didn't transfer the books of God's words in time, and the books were seized by the police, I would have transgressed. Failing to protect the church's interests at this critical moment would be a disgrace. Although the transfer process was risky, I believed that God is almighty, and that everything was under God's control. Whether I was to be arrested was determined by God; if God did not permit it, the police would not even touch a single hair on my head. Reflecting on God's words, I became less fearful. After discussing with the two sisters, we quickly split up to take action separately. One went to inform the brothers and sisters, and I, along with another sister, took charge of transferring the books of God's words. Only when all the books of God's words had been safely transferred did I finally feel relieved.

Later, due to the betrayal of a Judas, more and more people in the church were arrested, and the books of God's words kept getting seized by the police. On January 14, 2022, Yang Hong, who was hosting me, was also

arrested by the police. Without a suitable place to stay, I considered rushing off to escape, thinking, “If caught by the police, I will endure severe torture. If I can’t bear it and betray God like Judas, the consequences will be unimaginable.” I finally found a relatively safe place, but before long, this place was also sold out by a Judas, so I had to move again. Without a suitable place to stay, I felt that nowhere was safe for us. I felt so helpless and distressed, and couldn’t help but complain, “When will these days spent living in constant fear and anxiety, come to an end? It would be better if the police just arrested and beat me to death.” In my abject pain, I thought of God’s words: **“You must endure all; for Me, you must be ready to relinquish everything you possess and do everything you can to follow Me, and be ready to expend your all. Now is the time that I shall test you: Will you offer your loyalty to Me? Can you loyally follow Me to the end of the road? Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road? Remember this! Do not forget! All that occurs is by My goodwill, and everything is under My observation. Can you follow My word in all that you say and do? When the trials of fire come upon you, will you kneel down and call out? Or will you cower, incapable of moving forward?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). God’s words helped me understand that though this wave of persecution and arrests the church was facing, with some Judases being revealed and the lack of safe places to do duties, presented us with many difficulties, these difficulties were able to perfect my faith and reveal my corruption. God’s work in the last days is meant to test people’s faith through various forms of persecution, tribulation, trials, and refinements, revealing who truly believes and who does not. Those who continue to read God’s words and remain loyal in their duties in danger and adversity, standing firm in testimony in the face of the great red dragon

even when arrested, are the true believers and followers of God. On the other hand, those who cower, abandon their duties, and betray God to protect themselves during persecution and tribulation are the tares and disbelievers revealed through God's work and they will ultimately be eliminated. This is the wisdom of God's work. In the past, I thought I had strong faith and trusted God, but the facts showed that I lacked true loyalty and submission. In such a situation, I kept hiding and moving around, complaining and refusing to submit when I faced physical suffering, and even considering letting the police catch and beat me to death to avoid living in constant fear. I saw just how rebellious I had been! I was failing to bear witness for God at crucial moments, and was instead, compromising with Satan. I truly disappointed God! I also realized that, in the face of persecution and adversity, I should maintain loyalty to God, and endure any hardship to the end, which is what true believers should do. With this understanding, I felt strengthened.

In March 2022, a sister who had been released informed me that the police knew I was a church leader and were using the Skynet surveillance system to track me, bragging that they would catch me as soon as I left the house. This information made me extremely anxious and fearful, and I felt like I was in constant danger of being caught. I thought, "If the police catch me, they won't let me go easily. Since they are specifically targeting leaders, they will definitely force me to betray the brothers and sisters. If I don't betray them, they will surely use severe torture on me, possibly even beating me to death or maiming me. If I'm beaten to death, won't my journey of believing in God come to an end? Won't I lose my chance to be saved?" I couldn't bear to think on this any further. A few days later, I received a letter from an upper leader instructing me and Sister Chen Li to transfer to the Morning Star Church. I was secretly pleased, thinking, "I can

finally leave this place. The situation here is too scary; the police have already arrested over ninety people. Staying here is too risky!” While waiting to transfer, I received another letter from the Morning Star Church. They said that two church leaders and dozens of brothers and sisters had been arrested, and that some of the books of God’s words had been confiscated by the police. Chen Li, being familiar with the situation there, had to head over that very night to handle the aftermath, delaying my transfer. Chen Li said, “The environment is so bad, and we have to go to the Morning Star Church to handle the aftermath. If you leave now, what will happen to the work of this church of ours?” Her words made me feel very guilty. The sisters were risking their lives to handle the aftermath while I was thinking of leaving early. As a church leader, I wasn’t protecting the church’s work or considering the sisters’ difficulties at this critical time, and just wanted to leave. How could I be so selfish? Realizing this, I explained the situation to the upper leader and expressed my willingness to stay and handle the church’s work. At this moment, I came before God to pray and seek, “What is God’s intention in allowing such an environment? How should I reflect on and know myself?” At that time, I read a passage of God’s words: **“When those who are loyal to God know clearly that an environment is dangerous, they still brave the risk of doing the work of handling the aftermath, and they keep the losses to God’s house to a minimum before they themselves withdraw. They do not give priority to their own safety. Tell Me, in this wicked country of the great red dragon, who could ensure that there is no danger at all in believing in God and doing a duty? Whatever duty one takes on, it entails some risk—yet the performance of duty is commissioned by God, and while following God, one must take on the risk of doing their duty. One should exercise wisdom, and one has need of taking measures to ensure**

their safety, but one should not put their personal safety first. They should consider God's intentions, putting the work of His house first and putting the spread of the gospel first. Completing God's commission of them is what matters most, and it comes first" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). Reading God's words, I understood that those who truly believe in God and are loyal to Him, when seeing the great red dragon madly arresting God's chosen people, can rebel against the flesh, disregard their own safety, and uphold the interests of God's house. This is someone who considers God's intention, someone with humanity and conscience. But when I saw that the church work needed cooperation, I only thought about my own safety and how to leave this place quickly, so I wouldn't have to spend my days living in constant fear and anxiety anymore. I didn't consider the church's work or sympathize with the sisters' difficulties, and just wanted to shirk my responsibilities and hide like a turtle in its shell. I had been such a coward, completely devoid of humanity! When faced with adversity, I protected myself and disregarded the church's work, showing my selfish and despicable nature. If I didn't make amends, I would definitely incur God's hatred and spurning. I couldn't follow the flesh or be a coward anymore. No matter how dangerous the environment became or how great the difficulties were, I had to apply myself to the fullest to uphold the church's work. This is the loyalty and submission that a created being should have, and it is testimony of triumphing over Satan. I was willing to stay and work with the sisters to handle the aftermath.

Later, the brothers and sisters read a passage of God's words to me, addressing my state. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists do their utmost to protect their safety. What they think to themselves is: 'I absolutely must guarantee my safety. No matter who gets caught, it mustn't be me.' ... If a place is safe, then antichrists will choose that place to work,**

and, indeed, they will seem very proactive and positive, showing off their great ‘sense of responsibility’ and ‘loyalty.’ If some work does entail risk and is liable to meet with incident, to get its doer found out by the great red dragon, they make their excuses and refuse it, and find a chance to flee from it. As soon as there is danger, or as soon as there is a hint of danger, they think of ways to extricate themselves and abandon their duty, without a care for the brothers and sisters. They care only about getting themselves out of danger. They may already be prepared at heart: As soon as danger appears, they drop the work they are doing at once, without a care for how the church’s work goes, or for what loss it may incur to the interests of God’s house, or for the safety of the brothers and sisters. What matters to them is fleeing. ... These people are unwilling to suffer persecution for believing in God; they are afraid of being arrested, tortured, and convicted. The fact is that they have long since succumbed to Satan in their hearts. They are terrified of the power of the satanic regime, and more afraid still of such things as torture and harsh interrogation befalling them. With antichrists, therefore, if all is smooth sailing, and there is no threat at all to their safety or issue with it, and no hazard is possible, they may offer up their zeal and ‘loyalty,’ and even their assets. But if circumstances are bad and they could be arrested at any time for believing in God and doing their duty, and if their belief in God may get them fired from their official position or abandoned by those close to them, then they will be exceptionally careful, neither preaching the gospel and testifying to God nor doing their duty. When there is a slight sign of trouble, they shrink back like a turtle hiding in its shell; when there is a slight sign of trouble, they wish immediately to return to the church their books of God’s words and anything related to belief in God, in order to keep

themselves safe and unharmed. Are they not dangerous? If arrested, would they not become Judas? The antichrists are so dangerous that they may become Judas at any time; there is always the possibility that they will betray God. Furthermore, they are selfish and despicable to an extreme. This is determined by the antichrists' nature essence" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God exposes that antichrists, in order to protect themselves, want to abandon their duties when faced with danger. They disregard the church's work and only think about getting out alive. Such people are selfish and despicable. I realized my behavior mirrored that of an antichrist. When there was no danger, I could proactively do my duties. But when many leaders and workers were arrested, some became Judas, and I was also sold out, I became timid and fearful, wishing to leave this dangerous place as soon as possible. I saw that I was truly selfish and despicable, always considering my own physical interests, and that I didn't think about working with the sisters as one to handle the aftermath and minimize the losses. In my duties, I lacked all loyalty and revealed the selfish and despicable disposition of an antichrist. Without the exposure of God's words, I wouldn't have recognized that this was an antichrist disposition.

Later, I read a passage of God's words, which brought some clarity to my heart. Almighty God says: **"People like this are just timid, and we can't definitely label them as antichrists based solely on this manifestation, but what is the nature of this manifestation? The essence of this manifestation is that of a disbeliever. They don't believe that God can protect people's safety, and they certainly don't believe that dedicating oneself to expending for God is devoting oneself to the truth, and that it is something God approves of. They don't fear God in their hearts; they are only afraid of Satan and wicked political parties. They**

don't believe in God's existence, they don't believe that everything is in God's hands, and they certainly don't believe that God will approve of a person expending everything for His sake, and for the sake of following His way, and completing His commission. They can't see any of this. What do they believe in? They believe that if they fall into the hands of the great red dragon, they'll meet with a bad end, that they could be sentenced or even risk losing their lives. In their hearts, they only consider their own safety and not the work of the church. Aren't these disbelievers?" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)).

God's words exposed my true state. I always claimed to believe in Almighty God, but when faced with the CCP's arrests, I didn't truly believe that everything was in God's hands, much less believe in God's unique authority. Upon learning that I had been sold out by a Judas and was being hunted by the police, I feared being captured, maimed, or beaten to death, and even felt a desire to betray God. Through the revelations of facts, I saw just how timid and cowardly I truly was, and that I lacked any understanding of God's authority. I acted as if my life were in Satan's hands. I was so terrified by the CCP's large-scale arrests that I completely lost my nerve. I'd been so pathetic! In reality, no matter what methods or advanced technology the CCP uses to monitor or capture me, without God's permission, their schemes cannot succeed. I recalled one day in 2021, when I was about to visit a sister's house for a meeting. Just as I was about to go upstairs, I remembered an urgent matter in the church and decided not to go up. The next day, I found out the police had raided her home at that very moment. Without God's protection, I would have fallen into the police's hands. Similarly, though I'd been sold out by Judases and the CCP knew I was a church leader and was using high-tech surveillance to track me, I knew that without God's permission, no matter how the great red dragon

tried every possible way to capture me, its efforts would all be in vain. If God permitted, I wouldn't be able to escape even if I tried. My life and death are in His hands, not Satan's. When faced with danger, my desire to flee stemmed from my excessive fear of death and greed for life. I considered my life as most important, thinking that if I lost my life, I couldn't pursue salvation anymore and that I'd have no good outcome and destination. So, when danger arose, I always wanted to protect my life. The Lord Jesus said: **"He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it"** (Matthew 10:39). Throughout history, disciples and apostles of the Lord, while spreading the gospel, have been stoned to death and torn apart by horses. Though their bodies died, they bore witness to God before Satan, which is being persecuted for righteousness and commemorated by God. On the other hand, those who, when in danger, betray God, become Judases, or abandon their duties out of their greed for life, might seem alive in the flesh, but they have lost their testimony before God, and God does not commend them. I was fortunate to accept God's work in the last days, which is a great grace. If God allows me to be captured, I should bear witness to God before Satan without any personal choice, knowing that even if I am captured or die, it will be meaningful and valuable. Later, many church members were betrayed by Judases, and normal gatherings and duties were disrupted. Brothers and sisters lived in fear. Facing such a situation, I was also weak and often prayed to God, asking for faith and courage. I resolved that no matter the difficulties, I would rely on Him to handle the aftermath. One church urgently needed new leaders, and I had to go there and organize an election. Though I had concerns, especially about being tracked by the police's Skynet surveillance system, and I felt timid and fearful, I remembered God's words: **"Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water**

or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). God's words strengthened my faith. Satan is merely a service object in God's hands, a foil, and I should have no fear. I must pray and rely on God, place myself in His hands, and fulfill my duties. I then relied on God in organizing the election of the church leader, and in practicing this way, I felt peace and stability in my heart.

Through this experience, I gained some understanding of my selfish and despicable corrupt disposition, a truer realization of God's almightiness and sovereignty, and discernment of the CCP's essence in resisting God. These are insights I couldn't have gained in a comfortable environment.

70. How I Cast My Hateful Emotions Aside

By Li Jia, China

Li Xin was my partner in supervising the text-based work, but later on, she was dismissed because she was unable to do real work. She couldn't accept the fact she'd been dismissed and kept vying for status and competing with me. I could tell that Li Xin had a bad attitude toward me—she ignored me when I spoke with her and wasn't proactive about discussing the work, which led to delays in the progress of some projects. She also looked down on me for the deficiencies in my work, would brag about how she used to work to me, and point out my corruption with disparaging remarks. I felt a bit constrained and blindly recognized that I was being too concerned with my face. I thought I was a less competent worker than her and was not suited to serve as a team leader. I became a bit negative, and even considered resigning and letting Li Xin take over. Later, it was only with the fellowship and help of my leader that my state improved a bit, but I still felt constrained when working with Li Xin. Later on, when my leader learned that Li Xin was willful in doing her duty, often vied for status and would attack and exclude others, the leader dissected and exposed her issues. At first, I was able to treat Li Xin in the correct manner, and also lovingly helped her and guided her to reflect on her issues, but later on, when I saw what she wrote in her reflection and understanding, I totally lost my cool. She wrote that she not only attacked and excluded me to my face, she also spoke critically of me with other members and the leader behind my back. I was so angry and upset, and wondered how she could treat me that way. Wasn't she destroying my reputation behind my back? I found it unacceptable that she would treat me that way after I had lovingly fellowshiped and helped her when she was negative and weak. I

thought I was so cowardly to be tolerant and patient with her and only reflect on myself and I began to feel a bit hateful toward Li Xin. Why was I always forgiving others? Didn't that make me look like a useless pushover and too accommodating? This time I couldn't forgive her so easily, I had to show her that I could be tough and was not to be trifled with. I felt especially repressed and pained those two days, and became mired in emotions of rage and hate. Sometimes, when Li Xin took the initiative to talk to me about work, I would want to converse with her normally like before, but then all the memories of what had happened would flood my mind, and I would be gripped by an ardent conviction, "I can't compromise with her so easily, I've got to be tough. 'The nice person gets bullied, just as the gentle horse gets ridden.' I can't come off as too warm and nice to her. She's treated me so poorly, so why can't I make her feel a little pain?" After that, when Li Xin spoke to me, I would respond normally, but I would adopt a cold expression and be a bit curt, and I would also intentionally avoid eye contact. During that time, I felt terribly restless, and just wanted to be by myself in peace and quiet. I tried not to think about these annoying things, but I just couldn't get those thoughts out of my mind. Later on, I suppressed those negative emotions and was able to converse with Li Xin normally about work, but I always felt like venting my dissatisfaction, rage and hate on her. I was quite pained and tormented and didn't know how to rectify my state. All I could do was bring my innermost thoughts to God, praying to Him, time and again, "Oh God, seeing what Li Xin did to me, I feel so angry. I feel some hate toward her and even desire to seek revenge. Oh God, I don't want to live by my corrupt disposition, and I want to interact normally with her, but I just can't do it, my stature is too small. Please help me and guide me."

Later on, I saw this passage of God's words: **"If someone has hurt you before, and you treat them the same way, is this in line with the truth principles? If, because they hurt you—hurt you very badly—you try by fair means or foul to retaliate against and punish them, according to the nonbelievers, this is fair and reasonable, and there is nothing to criticize; but what kind of a course of action is this? This is hotheadedness. They hurt you, which course of action is the revelation of a corrupt satanic nature, but if you retaliate against them, is your course of action not the same as theirs? The mentality, starting point, and source behind your retaliation are the same as theirs; there is no difference. So, the character of your actions is certainly hotheaded, natural, and satanic. Seeing as it is satanic and hotheaded, should you not change this course of action of yours? Should the source, intents, and motivations behind your actions change? (Yes.) How do you change them? If what happens to you is something small, although it makes you uncomfortable, when it does not touch on your own interests, or hurt you badly, or cause you to hate it, or make you risk your life to retaliate, then you can lay down your hatred without relying on hotheadedness; rather, you can rely on your rationality and humanity to properly and calmly handle this matter. You can frankly and sincerely explain this matter to your counterpart, and resolve your hatred. But, if this hatred is too deep, such that you get to the point of wanting retaliation and feeling bitter hatred, then can you still exercise patience? When you are able to not rely on hotheadedness, and can calmly say, 'I must be rational. I must live by my conscience and reason, and live by the truth principles. I cannot respond to evil with evil, I must stand firm in my testimony and shame Satan,' is this not a different state? (It is.) What kinds of states have you had in the past? If**

someone else steals something of yours, or eats something of yours, this does not amount to some great, deep hatred, so you will not think it necessary to go argue with them until you are red in the face because of this matter—it is beneath you, and not worth it. In this kind of situation, you can handle the matter rationally. Is being able to handle the matter rationally equivalent to practicing the truth? Is it equivalent to having the truth reality in this matter? Absolutely not. Rationality and practicing the truth are two separate things. If you encounter something that makes you particularly furious, but you are able to rationally and calmly deal with it, without revealing hotheadedness or corruption—this requires you to understand the truth principles and rely on wisdom to deal with it. In such a situation, if you do not pray to God or seek the truth, hotheadedness will easily arise in you—even violence. If you do not seek the truth, only adopting human methods, and dealing with the matter according to your own preferences, then you cannot resolve it by preaching a little doctrine or sitting down and laying your heart bare. It is not that simple” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. Only Resolving One’s Corrupt Disposition Can Bring About True Transformation). As I pondered God’s words, I began to feel quite guilty. Because I thought that Li Xin had damaged my reputation by judging me in front of others, I wanted to take revenge on her and make life hard for her. How were my actions any different from hers? Wasn’t I just letting my hotheadedness and corrupt disposition dictate my actions? Was Satan not at the root of all this? I wasn’t practicing the truth! I had always thought of myself as being quite kind and tolerant and wasn’t typically petty and calculating with people. Only after reading God’s words did I realize that I would only not be petty in regard to matters that I didn’t have a stake in. I didn’t find it necessary to get too caught up in trivial and unimportant

matters. If I was too petty, I would seem undignified and narrow-minded. I was able to deal with these issues reasonably and appeared magnanimous and forgiving. Just like at first, when Li Xin had a bad attitude toward me, I was able to treat her properly and be understanding toward her. I felt that it was normal for her to reveal corruption and I fashioned myself to be quite forgiving. But when I learned that Li Xin had been criticizing me in front of other team members and the leader, I took it as a big affront to my integrity and dignity; I just couldn't take it any longer and became mired in rage and hate. I saw that I was not truly patient and tolerant. God's words say: **"If you encounter something that makes you particularly furious, but you are able to rationally and calmly deal with it, without revealing hotheadedness or corruption—this requires you to understand the truth principles and rely on wisdom to deal with it."** I then thought to myself, "What truths must I understand in order to rid myself of these hateful emotions?"

In my seeking, I came across this passage of God's words: **"Attack and retaliation is one type of action and revelation which comes from a malicious satanic nature. It is also a kind of corrupt disposition. People think like this: 'If you are unkind to me, I'll do wrong to you! If you don't treat me with dignity, why would I treat you with dignity?' What sort of thinking is this? Is it not a retaliatory way of thinking? In the views of an ordinary person, is this not a valid perspective? Does it not hold water? 'I will not attack unless I am attacked; if I am attacked, I will certainly counterattack,' and 'Here's a taste of your own medicine'—the nonbelievers often say such things; among them, these are all rationales that hold water and completely conform to human notions. Yet how should those who believe in God and pursue the truth view these words? Are these ideas correct? (No.) Why are they not**

correct? How should they be discerned? Where do these things originate? (From Satan.) They originate from Satan, of this there is no doubt. Which of Satan's dispositions do they come from? They come from the malicious nature of Satan; they contain venom, and they contain the true face of Satan in all its maliciousness and ugliness. They contain this kind of nature essence. What is the character of the perspectives, thoughts, revelations, speech, and even actions that contain that kind of nature essence? Without any doubt, it is man's corrupt disposition—it is the disposition of Satan. Are these satanic things in line with God's words? Are they in line with the truth? Do they have a basis in God's words? (No.) Are they the actions that followers of God should do, and the thoughts and points of view that they should possess? Are these thoughts and courses of action in line with the truth? (No.) Seeing as these things are not in line with the truth, are they in line with the conscience and reason of normal humanity? (No.) Now you can clearly see that these things are not in line with the truth or with normal humanity. Did you previously think that these courses of action and thoughts were appropriate, presentable, and had a leg to stand on? (Yes.) These satanic thoughts and theories take a dominant position in people's hearts, guiding their thoughts, viewpoints, conduct, and courses of action, as well as their various states; so can people understand the truth? Absolutely not. On the contrary—do people not practice and hold to the things they think are right as if they were the truth? If these things are the truth, then why does sticking to them not resolve your practical problems? Why does sticking to them not produce a true change in you, despite you having believed in God for years? Why are you unable to use God's words to discern these philosophies which come from Satan? Do you

still hold to these satanic philosophies as if they were the truth? If you truly have discernment, then have you not found the root of the problems? Because what you were holding to was never the truth—rather, it was satanic fallacies and philosophies—that is where the problem lies. You all should follow this path to examine and scrutinize yourselves; see which things within you are those that you think have a leg to stand on, that are in line with common sense and worldly wisdom, that you think you can put on the table—the incorrect thoughts, viewpoints, courses of action, and foundations that you have already treated as the truth in your heart, which you do not think are corrupt dispositions” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Resolving One’s Corrupt Disposition Can Bring About True Transformation). Through reading God’s words, I realized that I was revealing a vicious and malicious disposition. I thought it was just too much how Li Xin had criticized me in front of others and damaged my reputation and status. As the saying goes, “The nice person gets bullied, just as the gentle horse gets ridden.” If I just let this go, others would certainly say I was worthless and a total pushover, they’d think they could treat me however they pleased. I just couldn’t let this go unanswered, and I wanted to take revenge and ignore Li Xin. I also thought: It was Li Xin that mistreated me first. However I responded would not be out of line. At the least, I should let her feel what it was like to be hurt to vent some of my dissatisfaction and repression. Just like they say, “A tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye” and “If you’re unkind, don’t blame me for being unfair.” Through the exposure of God’s words, I saw that my thoughts and views all derived from hotheadedness, satanic philosophies and my corrupt disposition. I wanted to attack and get revenge on anyone that harmed or offended me. If I felt uncomfortable, I would let my attacker feel the same way. I realized that I was quite vicious and malicious. When I

let my corrupt disposition dictate my life, I only considered how to make myself happy and satisfied, and how to protect my interests. I didn't pause to think if my actions accorded with the truth at all, or if they would be damaging to Li Xin. I had become so selfish and narrow-minded. Li Xin was able to reflect on and know herself, she had gotten the courage to expose her corruption. She was showing a desire to practice the truth and repent. I should have treated her properly and put aside my biases. But not only did I not encourage her, I fixated on her revelations of corruption and sought to take vengeance on her for it. Wasn't I being unforgiving despite being in the right? Realizing this, I felt that my humanity was quite poor. When I was mired in emotions of hate, though my desire to take revenge was satisfied, I didn't feel any happier or at peace. Instead, I felt even worse, I felt guilty and accused. I experienced firsthand how living according to a corrupt disposition leads to personal suffering and harms those around you. I shouldn't have acted like that. I also realized that my views were just the same as those of nonbelievers. I thought I could only protect myself by responding to evil with evil. In the secular world, guileless people might often be bullied, and all they can do is just submit to humiliation and make compromises. However, in God's house, truth and righteousness reign. No matter what happens to us or how others treat us, it is all with God's permission, and there are lessons for us to learn from these things and the truths to practice. I should accept this from God and treat Li Xin right according to His words.

The next day, I still felt bad when I thought of this issue and was unsure how to face Li Xin, so I prayed to God, "Oh God, I know that I shouldn't treat Li Xin based on satanic philosophies, but my knowledge of this issue is too superficial and I lack that sense of release. I don't know how I should face her. Oh God, please guide me." After that, I came across

yet another passage of God's words: **"God is wrath, and He does not tolerate being offended—this is not to say that God's anger does not distinguish among causes or is unprincipled; it is corrupt humanity that has an exclusive claim on unprincipled, random outbursts of rage, rage of a kind that does not distinguish between causes. Once a man has status, he will often find it difficult to control his mood, and so he will enjoy seizing upon opportunities to express his dissatisfaction and vent his emotions; he will often flare up in rage for no apparent reason, so as to reveal his ability and let others know that his status and identity are different from those of ordinary people. Of course, corrupt people without any status also often lose control. Their anger is frequently caused by damage to their private interests. In order to protect their own status and dignity, they will frequently vent their emotions and reveal their arrogant nature. Man will flare up in anger and vent his emotions in order to defend and uphold the existence of sin, and these actions are the ways in which man expresses his dissatisfaction; they brim with impurities, with schemes and intrigues, with man's corruption and wickedness, and more than anything else, they brim with man's wild ambitions and desires"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). Pondering over God's words, I felt quite ashamed. I saw that God's essence is righteous and holy and He carries out His work in a very principled way. God's wrath and mercy are particularly pure and unblemished. Take, for instance, how God treated the cities of Sodom and Nineveh. Both cities denied God and had fallen to evil and licentiousness. Their evil deeds had long been known to God and they should have been decimated for the evil they committed. But the two cities had starkly different responses to the messengers from God that visited them. The Sodomites viciously persecuted the messengers and extremely

hated positive things. Ultimately, they enraged God's disposition and were destroyed by burning brimstone. By contrast, the Ninevites believed and abided by Jonah's proclamation and the whole city came before God to repent and confess, which led God to ultimately change His mind and take mercy on and forgive them. God is very principled in how He treats people. If people stubbornly refuse to repent, then God will condemn them and destroy them. But when they truly repent and confess their sins, God immediately retracts His wrath and shows mercy upon and forgives them. From God's attitude toward mankind, I realized that I wasn't at all principled in how I acted and treated people, that I acted entirely based on my corrupt disposition. When Li Xin revealed corruption but it didn't greatly damage my interests, I didn't point it out and help her and just indulge her. When my interests were severely damaged and I couldn't take it any longer, I wanted to take revenge on her by my hotheadedness, and even when she wanted to repent, I couldn't forgive her. I was mired in emotions of hate and bore a deep grudge. I realized that in both cases I'd treated Li Xin based on my corrupt disposition, and acted on behalf of my own interests. I sought to take revenge by my hotheadedness to maintain my pride, status and dignity, venting my dissatisfaction with Li Xin in the process. My rage and hate were selfish and narrow-minded, and were satanic. This was a revelation of my corrupt disposition!

Later on, I also came across another two passages of God's words: **"If something happened that aroused your hatred, how would you view it? On what basis would you view it? (Based on God's words.) That's right. If you don't know how to view these things according to God's words, then you can only be lenient wherever possible, suppress your indignation, make concessions and bide your time while seeking opportunities to retaliate—this is the path you would take. If you want**

to pursue the truth, you must view people and things according to God's words, asking yourself: 'Why is this person treating me like this? How can this happen to me? Why can there be such an outcome?' Such things should be viewed according to God's words. The first thing to do is to be able to accept this matter from God, and actively accept that it comes from God, and that it is something helpful and beneficial to you. To accept this matter from God, you must first regard it as being orchestrated and governed by God. Everything that happens under the sun, all that you can feel, all that you can see, all that you can hear—everything happens with God's permission. After you accept this matter from God, measure it against God's words, and find out what kind of person whoever did this thing is and what the essence of this matter is, irrespective of whether what they said or did hurt you, whether your heart and soul have been dealt a blow or whether your character has been trampled on. First look at whether the person is an evil person or an ordinary corrupt person, first discerning them for what they are according to God's words, and then discerning and treating this matter according to God's words. Are these not the right steps to take? (Yes.) First accept this matter from God, and view the people involved in this matter according to His words, to determine whether they are ordinary brothers and sisters, evil people, antichrists, disbelievers, evil spirits, filthy demons, or spies from the great red dragon, and whether what they did was a general display of corruption, or an evil deed that was deliberately intended to disturb and disrupt. All of this should be determined by comparing it against God's words. Measuring things by God's words is the most accurate and objective way. People should be differentiated and matters dealt with according to God's words. You should ponder: 'This incident has greatly hurt my

heart and soul and left a shadow over me. But what has the occurrence of this incident done to edify me for my life entry? What is God's intention?' This leads you to the crux of the matter, which you should figure out and understand—this is following the right path. You must seek God's intention, by thinking: 'This incident has traumatized my heart and soul. I feel anguish and pain, but I cannot be negative and reproachful. The most important thing is to discern, differentiate, and decide whether this incident is actually beneficial to me or not, according to God's words. If it comes from God's disciplining, and is beneficial for my life entry and my self-understanding, then I should accept and submit to it; if it is temptation from Satan, then I should pray to God and treat it wisely.' Is seeking and thinking like this positive entry? Is this viewing people and things according to God's words? (Yes.) Next, whatever matter you are dealing with, or whatever problems arise in your associations with people, you should look for the relevant words of God in order to solve them" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (9)). "If you choose the right path, when someone speaks in a way that harms your image or pride, or insults your integrity and dignity, you can choose to be tolerant. You won't engage in arguments with them using any kind of language or intentionally justify yourself and refute and attack the other party, giving rise to hatred in yourself. What is the essence and significance of being tolerant? You say, 'Some of the things he said don't align with the facts, but that's how everybody is before they understand the truth and attain salvation, and I was once like this too. Now that I understand the truth, I don't walk the nonbelievers' path of arguing about right and wrong or engaging in the philosophy of fighting—I choose tolerance and treating others with love. Some of the things he said don't align

with the facts, but I don't pay attention to them. I accept what I can recognize and comprehend. I accept it from God and bring it before God in prayer, asking Him to set up circumstances that reveal my corrupt dispositions, allowing me to know the essence of these corrupt dispositions and have an opportunity to begin to address these issues, gradually overcome them, and enter into the truth reality. As for who hurts me with their words and whether the things they say are right or not, or what their intentions are, in one respect, I practice discernment of it, and in another, I tolerate them.' If this person is someone who accepts the truth, you can sit down and fellowship with them peacefully. If they aren't, if they're an evil person, then don't pay attention to them. Wait until they have performed to a sufficient extent, and all the brothers and sisters thoroughly discern them, and you do too, and the leaders and workers are about to clear them out and handle them—that's when the time has come for God to address them, and of course, you will also feel delighted. However, the path you should choose is not at all to engage in verbal spats with evil people or to argue with them and try to justify yourself. Instead, it is to practice according to the truth principles whenever anything happens. No matter whether it's dealing with people who have hurt you or those who haven't and are beneficial to you, the principles of practice should be the same" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (15)). Reading through God's words, I felt even clearer inside and gained some paths of practice. I saw that no matter what happens to us, it is all with God's permission and there are lessons that we should learn. God requires us to treat people in a principled manner. When dealing with those who have harmed us, we shouldn't always submit to humiliation and compromise, nor should we be mired in hatred and seek

revenge. Rather, we should accept the situation from God, seek God's intention and handle the matter according to the truth principles. If someone is revealing corruption, and unwittingly harms us with their words or actions, we must show loving tolerance and forbearance, use their criticisms and exposure to reflect on our own issues and focus on our own life entry. If they have the wrong intentions in how they speak and act, which is judging and attacking us behind our backs, we cannot blindly reflect on ourselves, but must also discern what kind of person they are, what intentions they have, and point out their issues. If they are willing to accept the truth, repent and transform, then they should be treated like brothers and sisters and offered fellowship and support. If they do not accept the truth in the slightest and are evil people and antichrists, then they should be exposed, discerned, unmasked and reported according to the truth and should also be despised and rejected. This is the actual way to treat people according to the truth principles. Li Xin's corrupt disposition was relatively severe, but she was willing to accept the truth and to repent and transform, so I should treat her properly. I had to be tolerant and patient with her and forgive her for harming me. As for the issues she had that she hadn't recognized, I should point them out and help her, guide her to know herself and resolve her corrupt disposition. Also, through this situation, I reflected on and came to know myself. I saw that my stature was too small and my desire for reputation and status was too strong. When Li Xin's words and actions threatened my status and pride, I desired to seek revenge by my hotheadedness and lost the reason that a normal person ought to have. Some of Li Xin's criticisms of me lacked objectivity, but some identified real problems that I had. For instance, in my duty, I focused only on my work rather than on experiencing God's words; I lacked abilities to prioritize tasks; and so on. These were all my deficiencies. I might have lost some

face from the criticisms, but they helped me identify my issues more clearly. It was also helpful for my life entry. So why should I resent and despise her? The more I thought about it, the more touched I felt, and my bias toward Li Xin eventually disappeared altogether.

Later on, during a gathering, I opened up to Li Xin about the corruption I'd revealed and my own life entry. Once I practiced in that way, I felt the estrangement between us vanished and I could finally treat her properly. Later on, while partnering with Li Xin, I realized her vying for status was still very severe, and she hadn't known herself much. Sometimes her evaluation of me would lack objectivity. I tried to accept it from God, reflect on my issues and refrain from seeking vengeance by hotheadedness, while also focusing on discernment and observation. When I saw that Li Xin's corrupt disposition had become quite serious, her humanity was poor, she constantly failed to truly repent and was causing disturbances and disruptions, I reported her situation to the leader. Ultimately, Li Xin was dismissed. I felt much calmer and liberated practicing in this way. Thank God! Through this experience I have found that only by practicing the truth and living by God's words can we truly live out a human semblance.

71. Is Respecting the Old and Caring for the Young the Mark of a Good Person?

By Zhou Zhou, China

I was born into a traditional Chinese family. Ever since I was young, my parents taught me to be a well-educated, sensible, and polite child, and to greet my elders respectfully when I saw them and not be discourteous, or else people would say I was ill-bred. After I started going to school, the teachers often told us that China has always been a country that emphasizes rituals and etiquette, and that people must have good manners in their interactions with others. I would often see moral stories such as the tale of Kong Rong giving up the larger pears in my textbooks, and these stories became deeply ingrained in my mind. I thought that a person ought to have proper etiquette and respect the old and care for the young; only then could they be a well-bred, good person. All along, I lived according to this traditional culture, showing respect and politeness to my elders and never offending them. Even if there was a time when I saw them do something wrong, I would never dare to point it out in front of their faces. After I began believing in God and doing my duty, in the church, I still lived by the traditional ideas of being well-educated and sensible, of respecting the old and caring for the young. Especially when it came to how I regarded the older brothers and sisters, I would never call out their names directly, always respectfully referring to them as “Mrs. So-and-so” or “Mr. So-and-so” so that people would think I was thoughtful and well-mannered. When I was partnered with some elderly brothers and sisters and saw that they had some problems in their duties, I didn’t dare to mention it to them. I thought to myself, “These brothers and sisters are all from my parents’ generation, and some of them are even old enough to be my grandfather or

grandmother. If I point out their problems directly, won't they say that I'm disrespectful and ill-bred?" Because of this, I hardly ever pointed out their problems. Even if I said something, I would have to search for the right words first and speak using a gentle tone so as not to hurt their pride. Because I always behaved in a refined, cultivated, and polite manner in front of the brothers and sisters, everyone thought I was mature and steady and that I had good humanity, and I thought that by doing this I was practicing the truth.

Later on, I took up the text-based duty in the church. One time, the leader said that the text-based work was short-staffed. She said that a brother named Wen Tao had done the text-based duty in the past and grasped some of the principles, so she wanted to arrange for him to come on board and asked me to fellowship with him. After I went to fellowship with Wen Tao, he was willing to cooperate, only saying that he was in poor health and couldn't overwork himself. I told him that we could arrange his workload reasonably based on his health condition, and that way his health and energy would be well-maintained. He agreed to this. However, it had only been a couple days when the leader said that Wen Tao had written her a letter saying his health wasn't good and that he wanted to spread the gospel instead of doing the text-based duty. The leader asked me to go fellowship with Wen Tao again. I thought to myself, "When he spreads the gospel, he usually has to run around a lot; wouldn't he still have to suffer? Why is he willing to spread the gospel but not to do the text-based duty? Is he having some kind of difficulty? Or is it that he thinks doing the text-based duty won't allow him to be in the limelight?" So I wanted to fellowship with him, but I was also worried about what he'd think of me if I brought this up to his face. Maybe he'd call me young and arrogant, saying, "You're still new to believing in God yet you're already pointing out my

problems. You're being discourteous and disrespectful!" Based on his age, Wen Tao could be considered my elder, and when I saw him, I would usually call him "Mr. Wen." If I pointed out his problems to his face this time, wouldn't that mean that I was poorly brought up and disrespectful? Thinking of this, I thought I ought to keep my mouth shut. The next day, when I met with Wen Tao, I just asked him some questions about his state, and whether he had any concerns about his duty, and then I fellowshiped with him based on my own experience. In the end, he agreed to continue doing the text-based duty.

Not long after, Wen Tao discussed his state during a gathering, and a sister pointed out his issues, saying, "Is there a difficulty that made you unwilling to do the text-based duty? Or was there a motive behind it? Was it because this duty is done away from the spotlight, or was it something else?" Thanks to this sister's reminder, Wen Tao began to self-reflect, and he realized that his selectiveness about his duty was influenced by his desire for reputation and status. He thought spreading the gospel would put him in the spotlight, making brothers and sisters think highly of him wherever he went, whereas the text-based duty would not allow him to be in the limelight and nobody would know how much work he put in. Because of this, he wanted to spread the gospel, a duty that would place him in the spotlight. After this, Wen Tao ate and drank God's words, reflecting on and trying to know himself, and he realized that in his pursuit of reputation and status, he was walking the path of Paul. He reversed the mistaken view with which he regarded his duties and wrote an experiential testimony article. Hearing about this, I reflected, thinking, "I also knew that there was a reason behind Wen Tao's unwillingness to do the text-based duty, so why was I so slow to react and unwilling to point out his problems? What exactly is controlling me here?" Then, I read God's words: "**In the church,**

if someone is older or has believed in God for many years, you always want to give them face. You let them finish speaking, not interrupt them even if they are speaking nonsense, and even when they do something wrong and need to be pruned, you still try to save their face and avoid criticizing them in front of others, thinking that regardless of how unreasonable or terrible their actions may be, everyone still needs to forgive and tolerate them. You also often teach others: ‘We should give the elderly some face and not harm their dignity. We are their juniors.’ Where does this term ‘juniors’ come from? (Traditional culture.) It’s derived from traditional cultural thought. Additionally, a certain atmosphere has formed in the church whereby people, upon meeting older brothers and sisters, warmly refer to them as ‘Big Brother,’ ‘Big Sister,’ ‘Auntie,’ or ‘Older Brother,’ as if everyone is part of a big family; these older people are shown extra respect, which unconsciously leaves a good impression of the younger people in others’ minds. These elements of traditional culture are deeply rooted in the thoughts and bones of Chinese people, to the extent that they continuously spread and shape the atmosphere in church life. Because people are often restricted and controlled by these concepts, they not only personally endorse them, work hard to act and practice in this direction, but also approve of others doing the same, instructing them to follow along. Traditional culture is not the truth; this is certain. But is it enough for people to simply know it’s not the truth? That it is not the truth is one aspect; why should we dissect it? What is its root? Where does the essence of the problem lie? How can one let go of these things? Dissecting traditional culture is for the purpose of providing you with an all-new understanding of the theories, thoughts, and views of this aspect deep in your heart. How can this all-new understanding

be achieved? First, you have to know that traditional culture originates from Satan. And how does Satan instill these elements of traditional culture into humans? Satan, in every era, uses some famous figures and great people to spread these thoughts, these so-called sayings and theories. Then, gradually, these ideas are systematized and concretized, coming ever closer to people's lives, and eventually they become widespread among people; little by little these satanic thoughts, sayings, and theories are instilled into people's minds. After being indoctrinated, people consider these thoughts and theories coming from Satan as the most positive things they should practice and adhere to. Satan then uses these things to imprison and control people's minds. Generation after generation have been educated, conditioned, and controlled under such circumstances, all the way up until the present. All these generations have believed that traditional culture is right and good. Nobody dissects the origins or source of these so-called good and right things—this is what gives the problem its severity. Even some believers who have read the words of God for many years still think these are correct and positive things, to the extent that they believe these can replace the truth, can replace the words of God. Even more so, some think, 'No matter how much of God's words we read, living among people, the so-called traditional ideas and traditional elements of culture—like the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, as well as concepts like benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness—cannot be discarded. This is because they are passed down from our ancestors, who were sages. We can't go against the teachings of our ancestors just because we believe in God, and we can't alter or abandon the teachings of our ancestors and those ancient sages.' Such thoughts and awareness exist in all people's hearts.

Unconsciously, they are all still controlled and bound by these elements of traditional culture. For example, when a child sees you're in your twenties and calls you 'uncle,' you feel pleased and satisfied. If they directly call you by your name, you feel uncomfortable, thinking the child is impolite and should be upbraided, and your attitude changes. In actuality, whether they call you uncle or by your name, it doesn't have any bearing on your integrity at all. So why are you unhappy when they don't call you uncle? It's because you are dominated and influenced by traditional culture; it has preemptively taken root in your mind and become your most basic standard for treating people, events, and things, and for evaluating and judging all things. When your standard is wrong, can the nature of your actions be correct? It most definitely cannot" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). God's words exposed my exact state. I'd been deeply influenced by traditional culture and ideas like respecting the old and caring for the young and being refined and cultivated. From a young age, my education at home and at school made me believe that only if I was well-mannered, well-educated, and sensible could I be considered a good person, and that those who addressed elders inappropriately and were disrespectful to them were ill-bred and unworthy of people's respect. Whether I was interacting with nonbelievers or doing my duty in God's house, I was always living by these traditional ideas, regarding them as laws for conducting myself and believing that acting this way meant I was practicing the truth. When interacting with brothers and sisters who were older than me, to give them a positive image of me as someone who was well-mannered, I would never call them by their names directly, instead respectfully referring to them as "Mr." or "Mrs." At times when I noticed some of their corrupt revelations, I should have been an honest person and brought this up with them to help

them seek the truth to resolve it, but to avoid shattering the positive image of me that the brothers and sisters held in their hearts, I never dared to point those things out to them directly. I thought that doing this would show that I was poorly brought up and had no manners, and even if I said anything, I would beat around the bush and broach the topic tactfully, which was entirely ineffective. Just like last time, when I had fellowshiped with Wen Tao about this matter regarding his duties, I'd clearly seen his problem of rejecting his duty and should have pointed it out to him and helped him self-reflect and learn lessons, but to prevent him from thinking I was disrespectful and poorly raised, I refrained from bringing it up with him directly, only touching on it lightly by speaking of some words and doctrines and thinking that was enough to resolve the problem. In reality, it wasn't helpful to him in the slightest; I was harming him by doing this! I finally saw clearly that respecting the old and caring for the young is not the truth and is not a principle of self-conduct, nor is it a basis for judging a person's humanity.

After this, I read more of God's words: **"In what does God have man base his measurements of others? According to what does He have man view people and things? (His words.) He has man view people according to His words. Specifically, this means measuring whether a person has humanity according to His words. That's part of it. Beyond that, it's based in whether that person loves the truth, whether they have a God-fearing heart, and whether they can submit to the truth. Are these not the specifics of it? (They are.) So, in what does man base his measurements of another's goodness? In whether they are cultivated and well regulated, in whether they smack their lips or tend to rummage around for morsels when they eat, in whether they wait for their elders to sit before seating themselves at meals. They use such**

things to measure others. Is using these things not using the standard for behavior as being well-educated and sensible? (It is.) Are such measurements accurate? Do they align with the truth? (They don't.) It's quite clear that they don't align with the truth. What, then, ultimately comes of such measuring? The measurer believes that anyone who is well-educated and sensible is a good person, and if you have them fellowship about the truth, they'll always be inculcating people with those domestic rules and teachings, and good behaviors. And what ultimately comes of their inculcating these things in people is that they will lead people into good behaviors, but those people's corrupt essence will not change at all. This way of doing things is a far departure from the truth and God's words. Such people are merely possessed of a few good behaviors. So, can the corrupt dispositions inside them be changed because of good behavior? Can they achieve submission and loyalty to God? Not by a long shot. Whom have these people turned into? Pharisees, who have only outward good behavior but fundamentally do not understand the truth, and who cannot submit to God. Is that not so? (It is.) Look at the Pharisees—by appearances, were they not impeccable? They kept the Sabbath; on the Sabbath, they did nothing. They were courteous in speech, quite well regulated and rule-abiding, quite cultivated, quite civilized and learned. Because they were good at disguise and did not fear God at all, but passed judgment on Him and condemned Him, they were cursed by Him in the end. God defined them as hypocritical Pharisees, who are all evildoers. Likewise, the sort of people who use the good behavior of being well-educated and sensible as the criterion for their comportment and action are evidently not people who pursue the truth. When they use this rule to measure others, and to comport themselves and act, they

are, of course, not pursuing the truth; and when they make a judgment about someone or something, the standard and basis for that judgment do not align with the truth, but are in violation of it. The only thing they focus on is a person's behavior, their ways, not their disposition and essence. Their basis is not God's words, not the truth; instead, their measurements are based on this standard for behavior in traditional culture as being well-educated and sensible. The upshot of such measurement is that a person is good and in line with God's intentions to them, so long as that person has such external good behaviors as being well-educated and sensible. When people adopt such classifications, they have obviously taken an opposing stance to the truth and God's words. And the more use they make of this behavioral criterion to view people and things, and to comport themselves and act, what comes of it brings them all the further away from God's words and the truth. Even then, they enjoy what they are doing and believe that they are pursuing the truth. In upholding a few of the good statements of traditional culture, they believe that they are upholding the truth and the true way. Yet however they adhere to those things, however they insist on them, they will ultimately not have any experience or appreciation of God's words, the truth, nor will they submit to God in the least. Less still can this give rise to true fear of God. That is what happens when people uphold any and all such good behaviors as being well-educated and sensible. The more man focuses on good behavior, on living it out, on pursuing it, the further his remove from God's words—and the further removed man is from the words of God, the less able he is to understand the truth. This is only to be expected” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). On the surface, it seems that traditional culture helps us become

well-educated, sensible, and noble people, but in reality, it teaches us how to disguise and package ourselves and how to use superficial false appearances to cheat people. Living according to this traditional culture, we can only show a temporary false appearance of good behavior and absolutely cannot resolve our corrupt dispositions. By living according to traditional culture, we can never live out true human likeness. As a believer in God, His requirement for us is: **“To view people and things, and to comport oneself and act, wholly according to God’s words, with the truth as one’s criterion”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (2)). That is to say, people should speak and act with a God-fearing heart, protect the work of God’s house in their duties, purely open up and be an honest person when interacting with brothers and sisters, and help each other with life entry. This is the humanity and reason that people ought to possess. However, I didn’t conduct myself according to God’s demands, instead regarding the traditional culture that Satan instilled in us, such as being well-educated, sensible, refined, and cultivated, as truths to hold onto, using superficial good behavior to package myself. Especially when I was partnered with elderly brothers and sisters and clearly disliked them on the inside, I still pretended to be patient and loving toward them on the surface, using this to mislead people and make them see me in a good light. When I saw problems in the brothers and sisters’ duties, I didn’t point it out to them and help them, instead always considering their feelings and fearing that I’d hurt them by speaking up. I thought that acting like this meant I was respecting the brothers and sisters and exhibiting refinement, but in reality, I was just using this as a means to establish my good image as someone who was refined and cultivated. How could someone like me have any humanity? I was selfish and deceitful, no different than those hypocritical Pharisees who misled people. I was living according to this

traditional culture and becoming increasingly disingenuous and deceitful, with no conscience or reason. I also came to understand that the practicing of the truth which God demands is not pretending to show good behavior on the surface, but rather being able to do everything according to the truth principles and no longer living by one's corrupt disposition. Meanwhile, I mistakenly treated such traditional culture as respecting the old and caring for the young as the truth, thinking that I'd be practicing the truth as long as I held fast to these superficial good behaviors and pushing God's words and demands to the back of my mind. Was I really a believer in God? No matter how well I stuck to these good behaviors, it wouldn't mean I was practicing the truth, and it'd be impossible for me to receive God's approval.

Later, I sought a path to practice from God's words. I read God's words: **"What should the basis of people's speech and actions be? God's words. So, what are the requirements and standards God has for people's speech and actions? (That they be constructive to people.) That is right. Most fundamentally, you must tell the truth, speak honestly, and benefit others. At the very least, your speech must edify people, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, constrict them, expose their weaknesses, or hurt them. This is the expression of normal humanity. It is humanity's virtue. Has God told you how loudly to speak? Has He required that you use standard language? Has He required that you make use of flowery rhetoric or a lofty, refined linguistic style? (No.) There's not a bit of any of those superficial, hypocritical, false, nugatory things. All God's requirements are things of which normal humanity should be possessed, standards and principles for man's language and behavior. It doesn't matter where someone was born or what language they speak. In any case, the words you say—their verbiage and content—must be edifying to others. What**

does it mean, for them to be edifying? It means that others, having heard them, feel them to be true, and derive enrichment and help from them, and can understand the truth, and are no longer confused, nor susceptible to the misleading of others. So, God demands that people tell the truth, say what they think, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, or constrict others, or expose their weaknesses, or hurt them. Are these not the principles of speech? What does it mean to say one should not expose people's weaknesses? It means not to get dirt on other people. Do not hold on to their past mistakes or shortcomings in order to judge or condemn them. This is the least you should do. On the proactive side, how is constructive speech expressed? It is mainly encouraging, orienting, guiding, exhorting, understanding, and comforting. Also, in some special instances, it becomes necessary to directly expose other people's errors and prune them, so that they gain knowledge of the truth and desire to repent. Only then is the due effect achieved. This way of practicing is of great benefit to people. It is a real help to them, and it is constructive for them, is it not? ... And what, in sum, is the principle behind speaking? It is this: Say what's in your heart, and speak of your true experiences and what you really think. These words are the most beneficial to people, they provide for people, they help them, they are positive. Refuse to say those fake words, those words that do not benefit or edify people; this will avoid harming them or tripping them up, plunging them into negativity, and having a negative effect. You must say positive things. You must strive to help people as much as you can, to benefit them, to provide to them, to produce in them true faith in God; and you must allow people to be helped, and to gain much, from your experiences of God's words and the way you solve problems, and to be able to understand the path of

experiencing the work of God and entering the truth reality, allowing them to have life entry and making their life grow—which is all the effect of your words having principles, and being edifying to people”

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). From God’s words, I understood that the principles of interacting with people do not involve respecting the old and caring for the young and being well-mannered, as traditional culture taught us, nor do they relate to whether we speak in a soft, refined, and cultivated fashion. Rather, they involve looking at whether what we say is in line with the truth and whether or not it is edifying for the brothers and sisters. In God’s house, brothers and sisters are not separated according to status, nor are people arranged in order of seniority based on who is the oldest or who has believed in God the longest. Whether the brothers and sisters are old or young, everyone who believes in God and does their duties is of equal status. When people notice others’ problems, they can fellowship on the truth and help each other, also directly pointing out the problems when necessary and fellowshiping, giving pointers, and pruning based on God’s words. As long as one has right intentions and can benefit the brothers and sisters’ life entry instead of intentionally getting leverage on others and attacking them, then it’s even okay for them to speak in a sterner tone. People who pursue the truth will not develop prejudices toward me just because of how I speak and the tone I use, nor will they look down on me just because I am young. Rather, they will accept things from God, seek the truth, and try to understand their problems. There is no reason for me to have any worries or misgivings. The sister who pointed out Wen Tao’s problems was also quite young, and when she identified a problem, she was able to purely open up and speak about it, helping Wen Tao to understand himself. Wen Tao did not feel offended just because that sister was young, but rather accepted what she said with an

open mind and also sought the truth, reflected on and tried to know himself, and experienced true gains. As for me, I continuously lived by traditional culture such as respecting the old and caring for the young. When I noticed Wen Tao's problems, I was slow to react and didn't dare to point them out, just saying a few cursory, insincere words to disguise myself and wanting him to have a good impression of me. My acting in this way was not edifying for Wen Tao, and it brought no benefits to the church's work whatsoever. I also came to understand that only practicing according to God's words is in line with His intentions and beneficial to the church's work and the brothers and sisters' lives. After that, when I noticed brothers and sisters reveal corruptions or do things that violated the principles in their duties, I would point it out to them and fellowship on God's words to help them regardless of whether they were older than me. Although some brothers and sisters were unable to recognize their problems and accept my help at first, in time, by eating and drinking God's words and seeking and reflecting, they were able to accept my suggestions and also learn some lessons from them.

There was also a period of time when I saw that the leader appeared to be quite busy every day but was really just doing things by the book and passing on instructions in her implementation of the work. She didn't even think to resolve obvious problems in the church's work, nor did she actually ask about the brothers' and sisters' states. If things went on like this, it'd be tough for the church's work to achieve good results. I thought to myself, "I mentioned this problem to her indirectly before, but maybe she didn't realize the severity of the issue. Perhaps I should mention it to her again." But then, I thought of how this leader was the same age as my mother and was my elder, and how I'd been addressing her respectfully ever since I was young. If I accused her of not doing real work and behaving like a false

leader, wouldn't she think I was being disrespectful? Maybe it'd be better if I reported it to the upper-level leaders and had them fellowship with her instead. Upon having this idea, I thought of God's words: **"You must tell the truth, speak honestly, and benefit others. At the very least, your speech must edify people"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). I suddenly realized that my view on this was wrong. I had clearly noticed that this leader had problems in her duty, and I ought to point them out to her to help her recognize her issues and promptly reverse course. Doing this would be beneficial to her and to the church's work. However, I hesitated and didn't dare to say it, still being controlled by traditional ideas such as respecting the old and caring for the young and living by Satan's laws of survival. This sister was currently unaware of the problems she had, and she needed the brothers and sisters around her to point them out and help her with love. Since I'd noticed her problems, I ought to mention them to her. That was what fulfilling my responsibility looked like. After this, the next time I met with the leader, I found a passage of God's words to fellowship on with her and pointed out that by only holding gatherings and not actually resolving problems, she was walking the path of a false leader. After reading God's words, she acknowledged showing manifestations of being a false leader and reflected on how she considered the flesh and didn't want to worry or pay a price, and she was willing to reverse course going forward. After this, she changed a bit, growing more detailed in her work and fellowshipping with and helping the brothers and sisters to resolve some problems. I thanked God in my heart!

Experiencing this, I saw that living according to Satan's traditional culture might make us appear respectful and courteous on the surface and help us gain the respect of others, but in no way does it change our corrupt dispositions. Living by these things, one wears a mask and becomes

increasingly hypocritical, acting insincerely toward people. Only by looking at people and things, conducting oneself, and acting according to God's words and the truth principles can everything one does be beneficial for the church's work and the lives of the brothers and sisters, and only then can one live out true human likeness.

72. Does Having Status Guarantee Salvation?

By Claude, Cameroon

In May 2018, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. A year later, I was elected as a church leader, and after four years, I was elected as a church supervisor in Cameroon. I thought I was excellent, as if I were above other people. In my notions, I thought that God valued those with status more, and that these people were more valuable than others, and that they had a better chance of being saved. Over the last few years of being a leader, I had gained a lot, so I felt assured of my salvation. Because of this, I was more motivated in my duty. Even when others had already gone to sleep at night, I was still doing my duty. I thought that since I was paying a higher price and bearing more responsibilities than others, God would bless me more. As a leader, I always walked with my head held high, with a sense of superiority. I thought that so long as I remained a leader, my salvation would be assured. But things didn't turn out as I had hoped.

Because the gospel work urgently needed people, I was sent out to spread the gospel. Everything went smoothly with this, and I got some pretty good results in my duty. Before long, I was promoted to group leader. I was so happy to be promoted. I was both a group leader and a church supervisor. I felt even closer to salvation, and that my destination was more secure. In early September 2022, I was transferred to the New Light Church to do my duty. There, they already had gospel group leaders and church supervisors. So, I was just an ordinary gospel spreader, and I lost my titles of gospel group leader and church supervisor. Confronted by such changes, I felt my status had dropped. I lost my sense of superiority and even felt I might have lost my chance at salvation. After that, I lost my motivation in my duty and just wanted to remain silent. When I had status, I had walked

with my head held high, feeling very proud, but without status, I lost my enthusiasm. But I still held on to hope, thinking, “I’ve just arrived, so the brothers and sisters of the New Light Church don’t know me yet. As long as I keep working hard in my duty, with my caliber and work abilities, I will surely attract the attention of those around me, and sooner or later, I will be elected as a leader again. There is still hope for me to be saved!” Thinking of this, I didn’t become too negative and continued doing my duty.

At the end of December 2022, New Light Church needed to re-elect the church supervisors. Leading up to the election, I felt very confident and thought I would definitely be elected, because everyone knew I had been a leader for several years and had qualifications in this. But unexpectedly, when the votes were revealed, it turned out that I had only received two votes. I had lost the election. This was really difficult to bear. I felt completely worthless, like a bird with all its feathers plucked out, and I could hardly stand the others looking at me. During that time, I felt very negative and held misunderstandings toward God. I thought that having status would allow me to do my duty better and be recognized by God. Now that I had lost my status, I thought that this meant God would no longer save me and that I had lost my good destination. I didn’t want to attend group gatherings or reply to messages from my brothers and sisters. I just wanted to hide and shut myself away. I reluctantly attended gatherings and during these gatherings, I didn’t actively participate in fellowship. I didn’t want people to notice my presence because I no longer had any status. I was afraid that brothers and sisters would remember me as just a former leader who had been set aside. I didn’t even want to read God’s words or pray, and even when I did pray, I just went through the motions and didn’t know what to say to God. I was not active in my duty, and sometimes, I couldn’t calm my heart and I would look at news websites, political websites, and animal

videos. After viewing these things, I didn't feel as if I'd gained anything and I felt empty inside. I felt that my state was not right and that there might be God's intention behind my failure in the election. So I prayed to God, "God, I can't calm down to do my duties now, and I even want to distance myself from You. I don't understand why I'm like this. Please enlighten and guide me to understand my state."

I then told Brother Matthew about my state, and he had me read two passages of God's words. Almighty God says: **"In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to prune your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. The reason that these things exist in people's hearts is entirely because Satan's poison is always corroding people's thoughts, and always people are unable to shake off these temptations of Satan. They are living in the midst of sin yet do not believe it to be sin, and still they think: 'We believe in God, so He must bestow blessings on us and arrange everything for us appropriately. We believe in God, so we must be superior to others, and we must have more status and more of a future than anyone else. Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called believing in God.' ... Are not your current thoughts and perspectives just like this? 'Since I believe in God I should just be showered with blessings and it should be ensured that my status never slips and that it remains higher than that of nonbelievers.'**

fear that one day your status will be lost and your name will be ruined. People have never put aside their desire for ease” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). **“You are now followers, and you have gained some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. Why is it that the majority of people cannot remove themselves from negativity? Is the answer not invariably because of bleak prospects? ... The more you seek in this way, the less you will reap. The greater a person’s desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be pruned and the more they will have to undergo great refinement. Such people are worthless! They must be pruned and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of these things. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed, and those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You do not focus on pursuing personal transformation and entry, but focus instead on extravagant desires and things that constrain your love for God and prevent you from drawing close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). After reading God’s words, I reflected on myself. Since joining the church, I had always been a leader, and I had believed that my having status guaranteed my salvation. As the years went by, I became more and more focused on status. The more I was promoted, the more I felt that God valued and recognized me, which enabled me to suffer and pay a price in my duty. I even thought that if God ended His work today, I should be able to be saved. During the election, I hoped to be elected, and I felt that my

having been a leader before made me more qualified than others. But I lost the election and didn't gain status. I felt like a failure and that I had lost my hope of being saved, so I lost my motivation to do my duty. I no longer read God's words, ignored messages from brothers and sisters, was capricious in the way I attended gatherings, and I didn't follow up on potential gospel recipients in a timely manner. I didn't want to talk with or contact the brothers and sisters. I just wanted to be alone. I couldn't quiet my heart before God and I lost my desire to pursue the truth. I even watched secular movies. My heart grew darker and darker, and I felt I had lost the work of the Holy Spirit. God says: **"You do not focus on pursuing personal transformation and entry, but focus instead on extravagant desires and things that constrain your love for God and prevent you from drawing close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?"** Pursuing status cannot grant me the truth or a good destination, and having status cannot grant me entry into God's kingdom. Because the pursuit of status is a corrupt disposition and comes from Satan, it obstructs my pursuit of the truth and even leads me to become distant from God and into opposing Him. In the end, this could only lead to my destruction. God's words made me see that there was God's intention in this election loss. God was using this loss to prune my desire for status and to make me relinquish my self-indulgent desire for status and reflect on myself. Understanding God's heartfelt intention, I prayed to God, "God, I wish to repent. Please guide me to be able to know myself."

Afterward, I read some of God's words and some experiential testimony articles. I read God's words: **"Some people believe that if they have believed in God for a long time, then they are likely to be saved. Some people think that if they understand a lot of spiritual doctrines, then they are likely to be saved, or some think that leaders and workers**

will certainly be saved. These are all human notions and imaginings. The key thing is that people must understand what salvation means. To be saved primarily means to be freed from sin, freed from Satan's influence, and genuinely turn to God and submit to God. What must you possess to be free from sin and from Satan's influence? The truth. If people hope to obtain the truth, they must be equipped with many of God's words, they must be able to experience and practice them, so that they may understand the truth and enter into reality. Only then can they be saved. Whether or not one can be saved has nothing to do with how long they have believed in God, how much knowledge they have, whether they possess gifts or strengths, or how much they suffer. The only thing that has a direct relationship to salvation is whether or not a person can obtain the truth. So today, how many truths have you genuinely understood? And how many of God's words have become your life? Of all of God's requirements, into which have you achieved entry? During your years of belief in God, how much have you entered into the reality of God's word? If you don't know, or if you have not achieved entry into the reality of any of God's words, then frankly, you have no hope of salvation. You cannot possibly be saved. It doesn't matter if you possess a high degree of knowledge, or if you have believed in God for a long time, have a good appearance, can speak well, and have been a leader or worker for several years. If you don't pursue the truth and do not properly practice and experience God's words, and you lack real experiential testimony, then there is no hope for you to be saved" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to**

whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact. Therefore, all those who are punished are so punished for the righteousness of God and as retribution for their numerous evil acts” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). From God’s words, I understood that God treats everyone fairly, and that God determines people’s outcomes based on whether they possess the truth. People gain God’s approval and are saved, not because they are a leader or hold a certain position, but because they pursue and ultimately gain the truth. I thought that because I had been a leader for several years and held status, I would be approved by God, that I was favored by God and privileged, that I already held a place in God’s kingdom, and that I could be saved and enter His kingdom. This was an incorrect viewpoint of mine. In reality, holding a position in the church is not a condition for salvation, nor does having status indicate one is more valuable than others, or more likely to gain God’s recognition. In God’s house, there is no distinction of status. Everyone is equal before God. Regardless of what duty one performs, so long as one earnestly pursues the truth, cast off their corrupt dispositions, and becomes submissive to God, they can gain God’s salvation. Whether one is a group leader or a church leader, this is just an opportunity granted by God to gain the truth. It allows us to experience God’s work through the performance of our duties, to understand more truths, and to grow faster. However, it does not mean that being a group leader or a church leader guarantees salvation. Reflecting on my years as a leader, enduring hardships and paying a price, I attended every gathering regardless of the time, sometimes working late into the night while others slept, persevering to complete the work as quickly as possible, and so I thought I was doing my

duties well and that I loved God. But when I lost the election and my status, my rebelliousness and misunderstandings of God were revealed. I thought I was beyond salvation, and so I gave up on pursuing the truth, became negative and slacked off in my duties, didn't want to read God's words, and even watched secular movies. I saw that I did not love the truth, and that my proactiveness in my duty was to gain a good destination, not the truth, that's why I hadn't gained much truth in my five years of believing in God. This election loss revealed my corruption, making me realize that everything I had done before had been for the sake of status and a good destination, and I was trying to make a transaction with God. The truth was, I didn't love God as I thought I did, I had been rebelling against God, not listening to His words, and because of my loss of status, I had even distanced myself from God, not wanting to do my duties. I recalled what the Lord Jesus said: **“Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that follows the will of My Father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 7:21). God wants those who pursue the truth and follow His way. Such people are qualified to be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven. In the past, I had always been busy, attending every gathering, giving everyone the impression that I was diligent and responsible in my duties, but this was all deceit. I had been doing my duties with the intention of gaining blessings, which was not following God's will, and would not satisfy Him nor gain His approval. With tears in my eyes, I prayed to God, “God, I want to change and turn back to You, please prune me and judge me, so that I can let go of my self-indulgent thoughts and demands, no matter what position You place me in, even if people view it as the very lowest position, I will accept it, I am willing to submit to all of Your arrangements.”

One day, I read God's words: **"As a created being, man should seek to fulfill the duty of a created being, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. If what you seek is the blessings of the flesh, and what you put into practice is the truth of your own notions, and if there is no change in your disposition, and you are not at all submissive to God in the flesh, and you still live in vagueness, then what you seek will surely take you to hell, for the path that you walk is the path of failure. Whether you will be made perfect or eliminated depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). God's words gave me a path of practice. As a created being, I must pursue the truth according to God's intention and do my duty well, without seeking any reward. In the past, I had thought that having status would help me gain salvation, and that earning and holding on to the status of leader would ensure a good outcome for me, so I wholeheartedly pursued status and reputation instead of seeking the truth, which resulted in my corrupt disposition remaining unchanged despite my believing in God for many years. If I didn't amend my pursuit, I would certainly be eliminated by God. I also understood, that in the church, there are various duties, and that everyone does their duties according to their own circumstances and the needs of the work, and no matter what kind of duty it is, it is something we should do, it is all for the purpose of enabling people to practice the truth

and achieve a change in disposition. This is like our body, which is made up of many organs. Each organ has its function, and no one organ is more useful than any other. All functions are necessary for the survival of the body, and no single organ can be missing. Duties are not divided into high-level and low-level. Doing a special job or being a leader doesn't make one higher than others, superior to others, or more likely to be saved, and to think this way is incorrect. Even as a leader, without practicing the truth, I cannot obtain the truth or be saved. After understanding this, I regretted always striving for status, and I resolved to do my duty well. I was no longer negative and stopped watching secular movies, I attended gatherings regularly and often fellowshiped on my self-knowledge, and I changed my attitude toward my duty, becoming proactive in spreading the gospel. I also shared God's words with brothers and sisters, helping them resolve their abnormal states, and the effectiveness of my duty improved.

At the end of June 2023, another church was established and needed to elect leaders and deacons. I thought, "I have believed in God for a long time and have been a church leader before, so I'm most likely to be elected." But in the end, I was only elected as a gospel deacon. My first thought was that my hope of being saved had diminished, especially when I saw a sister who had believed in God for several years less than I had being elected as a church leader, I felt very upset. I also thought that in the future, more newcomers would join the church, that they would surpass me, and that over time I would have no place. Thinking of these things, I felt very upset and lost the motivation to do my duty. I prayed to God, "God, please keep my heart from being disturbed by these states. I am willing to let go of my pursuit of prospects and status, submit to all Your arrangements, and to do my duty only to satisfy You. If I still cling to the pursuit of status, I hope You will discipline me." I read God's words: "**Ultimately, whether people**

can attain salvation is not dependent on what duty they do, but on whether they can understand and gain the truth, and on whether they can, in the end, entirely submit to God, put themselves at the mercy of His orchestration, give no consideration to their future and destiny, and become a qualified created being. God is righteous and holy, and these are the standards He uses to measure all mankind. These standards are immutable, and you must remember this. Inscribe these standards in your mind, and at any time, do not think of finding some other path to pursue some unreal thing. The requirements and standards God has for all who want to attain salvation are forever unchanging. They remain the same no matter who you are” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God is righteous and holy, and God determines each person’s destination based on whether they have gained the truth. I should also pursue according to God’s requirements, let go of my desire for pursuing status and destination, and wholeheartedly fulfill my duties and pursue the truth. This aligns with God’s intention. My work ability is somewhat lacking, and my being elected as a gospel deacon now is another opportunity for practice given by God. I must cherish this opportunity and devote myself wholeheartedly to my duties, pursue and gain the truth, resolve my corrupt disposition, and fulfill my duties to satisfy God’s heart. This is what is most important. Afterward, I devoted myself to my duties, and the changes I experienced were all due to the guidance of God’s words. Thanks be to God’s salvation!

73. After a Leader I Admired Was Dismissed

By Li Lan, China

Li Cheng was a church leader mainly responsible for the work of clearing out and expelling people and who also oversaw my tasks. After interacting with him for over a year, I noticed that he had good caliber, showed a sense of burden in his duty, and could identify problems in the work and discern people's states. Especially when organizing clearing out and expulsion materials, he could grasp the key incidents and find suitable words of God to define those being cleared out and expelled based on their behavior, which were things I couldn't manage myself. Every time we gathered and fellowshiped on discerning various types of people, I always hoped that Li Cheng could be there. If he didn't show up, I would feel disappointed, like my support pillar was gone. Over the past year or so, the churches that Li Cheng was in charge of all cleansed away some evil people and disbelievers, significantly purifying the churches. I firmly believed Li Cheng was someone who pursued and understood the truth, even thinking that only someone like him could be a leader. I admired him deeply and saw him as a role model in my journey of faith.

One day in May of 2023, I received a letter from the upper-level leader saying that Li Cheng had been dismissed. I was stunned and couldn't believe the news, thinking, "Li Cheng is of good caliber, gifted, and produces results in his duty. How could someone like him be dismissed? Are the leaders too demanding? I must ask them why Li Cheng was dismissed when I see them." Then I couldn't help but compare myself with Li Cheng. Not only could he see through people's states and find suitable words of God to resolve their difficulties, he also had results in his work. As for me, I lacked his gifts, I couldn't suffer and pay a price as much as him,

and I often struggled to resolve people's states and frequently sought his help. Now that even someone like Li Cheng had been dismissed, I felt I was not far from being dismissed myself. This thought caused my spirit to collapse, and for the next few days, I had no energy in my duty and saw only darkness ahead. I realized that my state was wrong, and I wanted to seek the truth to resolve my problems. I knew that the church's decisions to dismiss people were based on the principles, and that Li Cheng's dismissal was certainly due to his violation of the principles in his duty. I recalled a passage of God's words and looked it up to read. God says: **"In every period and at every stage, some particular things happen in the church that are at odds with people's notions. For example, some people get sick, leaders and workers get replaced, some people are exposed and eliminated, some face the test of life and death, some churches even have evil people and antichrists who cause disturbances, and so on. These things happen from time to time, but they are by no means accidental. All of these things are the result of God's sovereignty and arrangements. A very peaceful period may suddenly be interrupted by several incidents or unusual events, which happen either around you, or to you personally, and the occurrence of these things breaks the normal order and normality of people's lives. From the outside, these things don't conform to people's notions and imaginings, they are things that people don't want to happen to them or to witness. So does the occurrence of these things benefit people? How should people deal with them, experience them, and understand them? Is this something any of you have thought about? (We should understand that this is the result of God's sovereignty.) Is it just a matter of understanding that this is the result of God's sovereignty? Have you learned any lessons from it? ... People had no understanding of God to start with, and when they**

encounter some things that are at odds with their notions, they don't seek the truth or find people to fellowship with, but only treat them based on their notions and imaginings, before finally coming to the conclusion that 'whether these things are from God or not is still uncertain,' and they start to have misgivings about God, and even doubt His words. As a result, their doubts, speculations, and wariness of God become more and more serious, and they lose the motivation to perform their duties. They are unwilling to suffer and make sacrifices, and they slack off, muddling through each day as it comes. Having experienced a few particular incidents, what little enthusiasm, resolve, and desire they had beforehand has deserted them and vanished, and all that remains are thoughts of how to make their own plans for the future and seek their way out. Such people are not in the minority. Because people don't love the truth and don't seek it, whenever anything befalls them they view it with their own eyes, without ever learning to accept it from God. They don't seek the truth in God's words in order to find the answers, and they don't seek out people who understand the truth to fellowship with and resolve these things. Instead, they always use their own knowledge and experience of dealing with the world to analyze and judge the things that befall them. And what is the end result? They trap themselves in an awkward state with nowhere to go—this is the consequence of not seeking the truth” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (11)). From God's words, I understood that when things happen in the church that do not align with people's notions, those who don't pursue the truth won't accept things from God. Instead, they will complain to and misunderstand God based on their own notions and imaginings, and their states will deteriorate, affecting their duties. This was exactly how I had behaved. I had always thought

highly of and looked up to Li Cheng. Seeing that he had good caliber, was gifted, was busy with his duty every day, and could always find the right words of God to resolve the brothers' and sisters' states, I thought he was someone who pursued the truth. Now, he had been dismissed, which didn't align with my notions at all. I didn't seek the truth on this matter, instead feeling wronged on behalf of Li Cheng and even thinking the leaders had been unfair to him. Wasn't I being superficial in this matter? God's intention was for me to learn lessons and understand aspects of the truth from such situations that do not align with human notions. However, upon hearing that Li Cheng had been dismissed, my first reaction was to complain that the leaders had handled this unfairly, thinking their requirements were too high and even wanting to grill the leaders about why they had treated Li Cheng in such a way. I also thought I was inferior to Li Cheng and might face dismissal too, which led me to live in negativity and misunderstanding, affecting my duty. From God's words, I saw the danger of not seeking the truth when things happened to me. Recognizing this, my resistance diminished, and I was willing to seek the truth on this matter.

Later, when the leader fellowshiped and exposed Li Cheng's behavior, I learned that Li Cheng was really arrogant and self-righteous and acted arbitrarily in his duty, calling the shots on everything without discussing matters with his co-workers. Despite repeated fellowship, he didn't reverse course, causing disturbances to the church's work. Only then was he dismissed and made to reflect. The leader also gave examples of Li Cheng's specific behaviors. Recently, a church leader had delayed their duty due to family entanglements, and without seeking the principles, looking into the context, or consulting co-workers, Li Cheng arranged materials to clear this person out of the church. Fortunately, the upper-level leader intervened to prevent this. Another time, Li Cheng privately appointed a

supervisor without consulting anyone. This supervisor had poor caliber and couldn't arrange work, which affected the work of the church. When the leader pruned Li Cheng for acting arbitrarily, he refused to accept it. Later, other sisters also spoke about some of Li Cheng's manifestations of acting arbitrarily in his duty. Hearing these facts, I was shocked, and I didn't want to believe that Li Cheng was such an arrogant person. The leader then showed me a passage of God's words: **"Antichrists are unable to cooperate with anyone; they're always wishing to set up solitary rule. The characteristic of this manifestation is 'solo.' Why use the word 'solo' to describe it? Because before they take action, they don't come before God in prayer, nor do they seek the truth principles, much less do they find someone to fellowship with and say to them, 'Is this an appropriate course? What do the work arrangements stipulate? How's this sort of thing to be handled?' They never discuss things or seek to reach a consensus with their co-workers and partners—they just consider things and scheme on their own, making their own plans and arrangements. With a mere cursory read-through of the work arrangements of God's house, they think they've understood them, and then they blindly arrange the work—and by the time others know of this, the work has already been arranged. It's impossible for anyone to hear their views or sentiments from their own mouth in advance, as they never communicate the thoughts and views they harbor to anyone. Someone may ask, 'Don't all leaders and workers have partners?' They may nominally have someone as a partner, but when it comes time to work, they don't anymore—they fly solo. Although leaders and workers have partners, and everyone who does any duty has a partner, antichrists believe that they have good caliber and are better than ordinary people, so ordinary people are not worthy of being their**

partner, and are all inferior to them. This is why antichrists like to call the shots and don't like to discuss things with anyone else. They think doing so makes them look like an incompetent good-for-nothing. What kind of viewpoint is this? What kind of disposition is this? Is this an arrogant disposition? They think that to cooperate and discuss things with others, to make inquiries of them and seek from them, is undignified and demeaning, an affront to their self-respect. And so, in order to protect their self-respect, they don't allow transparency in anything they do, nor do they tell others about it, much less discuss it with them. They think that to discuss with others is to show themselves as incompetent; that to always solicit other people's opinions means they are stupid and incapable of thinking for themselves; that working with others in completing a task or sorting out some problem makes them appear useless. Isn't this their arrogant and absurd mentality? Isn't this their corrupt disposition? The arrogance and self-righteousness within them is too obvious; they have lost all normal human reason, and they aren't quite right in the head. They always think they have abilities, can finish things by themselves, and have no need to cooperate with others. Since they have such corrupt dispositions, they are unable to achieve harmonious cooperation. They believe that to cooperate with others is to dilute and fragment their power, that when work is shared with others, their own power is lessened and they can't decide everything for themselves, meaning they lack real power, which for them is a tremendous loss. And so, no matter what happens to them, if they believe they understand and that they know the appropriate way to handle it, they won't discuss it with anyone else, and they will call all the shots. They will prefer to make mistakes over letting other people know, they will prefer to be wrong

over sharing power with someone else, and they will prefer dismissal over letting other people intervene in their work. This is an antichrist”

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God’s words expose that antichrists act arbitrarily, making all the decisions themselves in order to maintain their power. They neither seek the truth principles nor discuss with others when matters befall them, and their natures are arrogant and unreasonable. Comparing this to Li Cheng’s behavior, as a church leader, he acted arbitrarily and kept power to himself in his duty, and when brothers and sisters pointed out his issues, not only did he not reflect on himself, he also believed that he understood the situation and could make decisions on his own. He didn’t seek the principles, sidelined his co-workers, and privately arranged materials to clear people out, while also appointing an unsuitable supervisor, disrupting and disturbing the church’s work, and ignoring what others said. Did these behaviors of Li Cheng not precisely align with God’s exposure of how antichrists do everything “solo”? He monopolized power to control the church and disrupted the church’s work, which is the exact behavior of antichrists that God exposed. He had already started walking the path of an antichrist. The leaders and workers pointed out his problems several times, but he never took them seriously. The upper-level leader dismissing him based on the principles was entirely appropriate!

I couldn’t help but reflect, thinking, “After interacting with Li Cheng for such a long time, how come I couldn’t discern him and even thought that he had the truth reality and admired him?” While seeking, I read this passage of God’s words: **“There are some people who are often misled by those who outwardly seem spiritual, noble, lofty, and great. As for people who can speak eloquently of words and doctrines, and whose speech and actions seem worthy of admiration, those who are deceived**

by them have never looked at the essence of their actions, the principles behind their deeds, or what their goals are. Moreover, they have never looked at whether these people truly submit to God, nor have they ever determined whether or not these people genuinely fear God and shun evil. They have never discerned the humanity essence of these people. Rather, beginning with the first step of getting acquainted with them, they have, little by little, come to admire and venerate these people, and in the end, these people become their idols. Furthermore, in some people's minds, the idols whom they worship—and who they believe can abandon their families and jobs, and who seem superficially able to pay the price—are the ones who are truly satisfying God and who can really attain good outcomes and good destinations. In their minds, these idols are the ones whom God praises” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God.

How to Know God's Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). From God's words, I realized that my worshiping of Li Cheng was mainly due to the results he produced while supervising the clearing out work and his strong working abilities. He also had some intelligence and gifts and could find relevant words of God to fellowship that targeted people's states, so I thought he understood the truth and had reality. However, the facts showed that Li Cheng was completely unaware of the serious antichrist disposition he revealed. He was not willing to accept being pruned by the leaders, and it was clear that he did not accept the truth and usually just equipped himself with doctrines. He busied himself with his duty in order to produce results and get people to think highly of him, not pursuing the truth to resolve his own corrupt disposition at all, yet I worshiped him as an idol and even followed his example; how ignorant I was! I thought about how God approved of Peter because he focused on seeking the truth and satisfying God's intentions in both his daily life and his duty. With every

small matter, he focused on changing his old disposition. In contrast, I judged people based on their intelligence and gifts, the work they did and the suffering they endured on the surface. I saw that my view in judging people was in violation of God's requirements. If it hadn't been for Li Cheng's dismissal, I wouldn't have reflected on these issues and would have continued to follow his example. At this moment, I sincerely thanked God for orchestrating such people, events, and things. This was God saving me. Seeing that some brothers and sisters in the church still had not discerned Li Cheng, I fellowshiped with them on what it means to act arbitrarily, and also on how one should not judge people based solely on their appearance, but on whether they act according to God's words and can practice the truth to uphold the church's work. After listening, the brothers and sisters were able to discern Li Cheng somewhat.

Later, I continued to reflect: Why did I have such a strong reaction to Li Cheng's dismissal and immediately feel despondent? I examined myself and found that I held the view that if someone like Li Cheng, who was better than me in every respect could be dismissed, then I was close to being dismissed as well. Afterward, I read a passage of God's words: **"In the course of doing their duties, antichrists are constantly calculating for their own prospects and destiny: how many years they have been doing their duties now, how much hardship they have endured, how much they have forsaken for God, how much of a price they have paid, how much of their energy they have expended, how many years of their youth they have given up, and whether they now have the entitlement to receive rewards and a crown; whether they have accumulated enough capital these few years doing their duties, whether they are a favored person in God's eyes before Him, and whether they are a person who can receive rewards and a crown in God's eyes. ... They**

hold on firmly to their own ambitions and desires, regarding them as the truth, as the only goals in life, and as the most just undertaking. They do not know the truth that if a person's disposition does not change then they will forever be an enemy of God, and do not know that what blessings God gives a person and how God treats a person is not based on their caliber, gifts, talents or capital, but on how much truth they practice and how much truth they gain, and whether they are a person who fears God and shuns evil. These are truths that antichrists will never understand. Antichrists will never see this, and this is where they are most foolish. From beginning to end, what is the attitude of antichrists toward their duty? They believe doing one's duty is a transaction, that whoever expends the most in their duty, makes the biggest contribution to God's house and endures the most years in God's house will have a higher chance of being blessed and getting a crown in the end. This is the logic of antichrists" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). From God's words, I saw that antichrists treat their duties as a transaction, using working more and the results in their duty as bargaining chips to exchange for blessings from God. This is the logic of antichrists. I also held this viewpoint. When I saw that someone who was more outstanding than me in every way had been dismissed, I thought that sooner or later, I would be dismissed too. I felt that my future prospects were uncertain, which led to my negativity. In reality, God's standards for judging people are not based on how gifted they are or how much they appear to suffer or work, but rather on how much truth they practice and gain in their duties. Meanwhile, I judged people not according to God's words but based on my own notions and imaginings, thinking that people with gifts and who worked hard must be in line with God's intention and would gain His approval. Therefore, when I heard that Li Cheng was

dismissed, I couldn't accept it and even wanted to question the leaders about why he had been dismissed and seek justice for him. In reality, my coming to Li Cheng's aid was really just a pretext for me to argue back. I was worried that I'd be the next one to be dismissed and afraid that I wouldn't have a good future. Behind my desire to question the leaders was essentially a desire to question God, to complain that God was unfair and was too demanding of people. I hadn't stood in the position of a created being and submitted to God's work; rather, I had argued with and clamored against God. Only then did I realize how serious the nature of what I revealed was. I thought of Paul, who used the work he did as capital to clamor against God and demand a crown of righteousness from Him. In the end, he was punished and cursed by God. If I still did not repent, God would not approve of me no matter how much I suffered in my duty, and I would end up being punished just like Paul! Li Cheng's dismissal served as a warning for me, making me recognize that although I believed in God, I was worshiping people and walking the wrong path. From the bottom of my heart, I felt that this was God loving and saving me.

After Li Cheng was dismissed, he reflected for a while, gained some understanding of his corrupt disposition, and was reassigned to a duty by the church. I now do my duty together with Li Cheng again, but I no longer worship him like I did before. Instead, I focus on discerning whether what he says is based on God's words. If I have different opinions, I put them forward, I seek the truth principles for things I don't understand, and I report issues I cannot see through to leaders. By practicing this way, I'm able to understand some principles and find a path forward. Through this experience, I have come to realize the importance of seeking the truth, and I've begun to focus on reflecting on the things I do that violate the principles when doing my duty. I also lead the brothers and sisters to seek

the truth principles in their duties so that everyone stops focusing on external actions and concentrates on pursuing the truth and doing their duties according to the principles instead. This experience has corrected my mistaken view on things, and I am grateful for God's salvation!

74. How to Handle Others' Help and Advice

By Xiaoxuan, China

December 31, 2022, Saturday, Sunny

Time has just flown by. It's already been two months since I became a video work supervisor, and I didn't even notice. I feel like I've gained a lot lately. Whether it be in resolving the states of my brothers and sisters, or fellowshiping on work problems, I feel like I'm getting more and more comfortable. It seems like I have some caliber and that I'm up to this task. Oh, by the way, it's New Year's Day tomorrow and Li Ran has to head back home for a couple of days to see to something. She's been a supervisor for a long time and she always used to help me. But now that I've been practicing for a couple of months, I feel able to arrange work even without her by my side. The videos the brothers and sisters have been making lately aren't up to standard and they've become negative. I need to write to them in fellowship as soon as I can. I hope they can understand God's intentions and escape their negative states.

January 2, 2023, Monday, Clear to Cloudy Skies

Today I received letters from some of the brothers and sisters, saying that our fellowship really helped them and that moving forward, they are willing to improve their skills and do their duty properly. Reading these letters made me feel so happy, and I thought, "See, I really can solve some actual problems." And I gave myself a pat on the back. Li Ran returned this evening. She asked me about how the work had been going over the last couple of days and reminded me, "Just resolving everyone's states isn't enough, we also need to fellowship with them on techniques and principles,

or else they won't be able to make quality videos." I kind of agreed with what she said, but her frown and dissatisfied tone made me feel unsettled, "Didn't you see that I just did something good? Why do you keep picking on this little mistake?" After hearing her say "You can't just resolve people's states and be done with it" several times, I started to get really uncomfortable, as if doing this meant I had a really low IQ. "I do things with consideration too. You're highlighting a mistake made in a moment of thoughtlessness. Are you trying to make me look bad? It's as if the work I've done over the last few days is of no value." Li Ran was still summarizing problems in my work, but I didn't want to keep listening, and I snapped back at her, "Well, if you're so full of ideas, why don't you just come out and tell me exactly how to do this?" Li Ran was stunned for a moment, and things became kind of awkward. I realized that I'd embarrassed her by saying this, so I said a silent prayer to God, asking Him to help me calm down and not act on my emotions. After our discussion concluded, I wondered, "Li Ran wasn't wrong in what she was saying, but I still didn't want to accept it when I heard it. This indicates a corrupt disposition, but how am I to resolve it?"

January 5, 2023, Thursday, Cloudy

Today, Li Ran asked me how my state had been lately. I said, "Fine, just a little low on energy and sleepy." As soon as I'd said this, she replied, "Why are you sleepy? Don't you need to reflect on your attitude toward your duty? You say your state is fine, but if your state were normal, why is the work you're responsible for not getting any results? Your most recent video hasn't come out yet either, so what are you spending all your time on?" Li Ran then drew on her own experience of being in a perfunctory state in her duty to fellowship with me. I felt wronged and had a lot I

wanted to say back, “Am I being perfunctory? No. I’ve already recognized my perfunctory behavior and started correcting it, so why do you still think I’m behaving that way? The reason I’m not getting results isn’t because I’m not being attentive in my duties, I really do have a sense of urgency in what I’m doing, and it’s not as if I can just skip the research phase, is it? You keep picking at my problems and making a big deal out of them. Why don’t you see my progress? Do you expect me to be perfect?” After Li Ran’s fellowship, Shasha also spoke about how she had been perfunctory and had not borne a burden in her duties. The truth was, I displayed some of the behaviors she mentioned, but I didn’t want to admit this, and shot back, “I think I’ve been doing my duty pretty well lately. I haven’t noticed myself being perfunctory in my duties, as you say, but I’ll go pray and reflect, alright?” I realized how defiant I was being, and that this state was really bad, so I said a silent prayer, “Oh God, please watch over my heart. No matter who it is, so long as they speak in accordance with the truth, I should listen. I don’t want to resist the constructive criticism of my sisters anymore.”

January 6, 2023, Friday, Cloudy to Sunny

My heart is still heavy when I think about the state I revealed last night. “Why am I so hotheaded? Why can’t I stand to hear others point out my problems? What kind of disposition is this? Whenever somebody says anything about me, I fly off the handle. How can I do my duty or collaborate with others like this?” This morning, I watched an experiential video entitled How to Handle Being Pruned. It contained a passage of God’s word that really moved me. Almighty God says: **“When an antichrist is pruned, the first thing they do is resist and reject it deep in their heart. They fight it. And why is that? This is because antichrists,**

by their very nature essence, are averse to and hate the truth, and they do not accept the truth at all. Naturally, an antichrist's essence and disposition prevent them from acknowledging their own mistakes or acknowledging their own corrupt disposition. Based on these two facts, an antichrist's attitude toward being pruned is to reject and defy it, completely and utterly. They detest and resist it from the bottom of their heart, and have not the slightest hint of acceptance or submission, much less any genuine reflection or repentance. When an antichrist is pruned, no matter who does it, what it pertains to, the degree to which they are to blame for the matter, how blatant their error, how much evil they commit, or what consequences their evil creates for the church's work—the antichrist doesn't consider any of this. To an antichrist, the one pruning them is singling them out, or finding faults to torment them. The antichrist may even think that they are being bullied and humiliated, that they are not being treated as a human, and that they are being belittled and scorned. After an antichrist is pruned, they never reflect on what it was that they have actually done wrong, what corrupt disposition they have revealed, and whether they've sought the principles they ought to abide by, acted in accordance with the truth principles, or fulfilled their responsibilities in the matter in which they are pruned. They do not examine or reflect on any of this, nor do they think over and ponder these issues. Instead, they approach pruning according to their own will and with hot-headedness. Any time an antichrist is pruned, they will be full of anger, disobedience, and resentment, and will listen to advice from no one. They refuse to accept their being pruned, and are unable to come back before God to know and reflect on themselves, to address their actions that violate the principles, such as being perfunctory or running amok in their duty,

nor do they use this chance to resolve their own corrupt disposition. Instead, they find excuses to defend themselves, to vindicate themselves, and they will even say things to provoke discord and incite others” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status or No Hope of Gaining Blessings). God’s word says that because antichrists are averse to the truth, when they are pruned, or when others point out their problems, they staunchly oppose it. They are never able to reflect on their problems and always rely on their hotheadedness to handle things, and even fill their heart with fallacies, saying others are pruning them because they look down on and want to humiliate them. They are filled with complaints toward others. In comparison, my behaviors and those of an antichrist were the same. Li Ran pointed out that I was failing to grasp key points as I was resolving issues, and that I didn’t communicate enough on professional or technical matters. These were indeed issues worth focusing on. It was true that brothers and sisters’ professional skills and grasp of principles were lacking, which meant their videos always had to be reworked, and that this problem was indeed born of my negligence. After Li Ran finished making her suggestion, I should have quickly discussed how to correct this deviation, but because I couldn’t stand the tone she used when pointing out my problems, I felt like she was trying to humiliate and belittle me, so I couldn’t help but vent my dissatisfaction. I didn’t want to listen to anything she said afterward or recognize the problems she was pointing out. I thought that she was looking down on me and trying to humiliate and belittle me. Wasn’t what I was revealing the very same disgraceful behavior as those who don’t accept the truth and constantly make ridiculous arguments irrationally? People who really love the truth and are reasonable handle being pruned and their problems being pointed out with an attitude of acceptance. They are able to reflect and seek

the truth to resolve these deviations as quickly as possible. Even if they can't recognize these things at the time, they don't lose their temper or keep making ridiculous arguments to try and overturn others' criticisms. However, when my sister gave me some suggestions that would benefit the work, not only was I unaccepting, I believed she was trying to humiliate and belittle me. My understanding was absurd and unreasonable, and I didn't pray to God or rebel against myself. Instead, I vented my grievances and dissatisfactions to embarrass my sister. I was being shrill, refusing to allow anyone to bother or approach me. This indicates a disposition that is averse to the truth and filled with viciousness. If I don't correct this, God will surely spurn and eliminate me!

I recalled a passage of God's word I had read: **"Although, today, many people do a duty, there are only a few who pursue the truth. Very few people pursue the truth and enter reality as they do their duty; for most, there are still no principles to the way they do things, they are still not people who truly submit to God; they merely claim that they love the truth, and are willing to pursue the truth, and are willing to strive for the truth, yet it is still unknown how long their resolve will last. People who do not pursue the truth are liable to reveal their corrupt dispositions at any time or place. They are devoid of any sense of responsibility toward their duty, they are often perfunctory, they act as they wish, and are even incapable of accepting pruning. As soon as they become negative and weak, they are liable to abandon their duty—this happens often, nothing is more common; such is the way all who do not pursue the truth behave. And so, when people have yet to gain the truth, they are unreliable and untrustworthy. What does it mean that they are untrustworthy? It means that when they encounter difficulties or setbacks, they are likely to fall down, and to become**

negative and weak. Is someone who is often negative and weak someone who is trustworthy? Definitely not. But people who understand the truth are different. People who truly understand the truth are bound to have a God-fearing heart, and a heart of submission to God, and only people with a God-fearing heart are trustworthy people; people without a God-fearing heart are not trustworthy. How should people without a God-fearing heart be approached? They should, of course, be given loving assistance and support. They should be followed up on more as they do their duty, and given more help and instruction; only then can they be guaranteed to do their duty effectively. And what is the aim of doing this? The chief aim is to uphold the work of God's house. Secondary to this is in order to promptly identify problems, to promptly provide to them, support them, or prune them, setting right their deviations, and making up for their shortcomings and deficiencies. This is beneficial to people; there is nothing malicious about it" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). Thinking on God's word made me realize that the brothers and sisters don't point out problems and deviations because they are malicious or trying to ridicule and belittle people by exposing their shortcomings, but because they are being responsible for church work, and because everyone has a corrupt disposition, is unreliable, and is capable of involuntarily committing evil, violating principles by acting based on personal wishes, being perfunctory in duties, and delaying and disrupting church work, thus causing serious consequences. It's been said that "When people are lost, they are scared nobody will guide them." When people have someone around who often offers them help or prunes them in their duties, it is a great help and protection for them. Normally, when I follow up on one item of work and see omissions or deviations, I will point them out, and

make people aware of their seriousness and consequences. I do this because I want people to do their duties well and to avoid deviations and delays in the work. Li Ran was pointing out my problems for the same reasons. In part, this was to help me attain good results, but it was done out of love and a sense of burden, and for my own good. I shouldn't have resisted or gotten angry; much less should I have snapped at her. Just like in the beginning when the videos weren't up to standard, this was mainly because people didn't grasp technical principles. I was unaware of this problem, and when she pointed this out, I should have guided everyone in summarizing these deviations to learn some skills, but I never reflected on myself or summarized my problems and just snapped back at her. In what possible way was I being reasonable? I told myself that, moving forward, I should be accepting when others pointed out my problems and not be oppositional anymore.

January 7, 2023, Saturday, Sunny

Today a leader attended our gathering and discovered some deviations that had emerged during our work. For example, some brothers and sisters had a dispute over a video and we didn't clear up this problem, simply providing some suggestions and allowing them to move on instead, resulting in the video not being up to standard, delaying the work. The leader also exposed and criticized us for not doing real work. Hearing all these problems being called out one by one started to make me really uncomfortable, and I realized just how numb I'd become. The problems that this leader was pointing out were the same ones that Li Ran had pointed out to me. But because I hadn't wanted to listen and hadn't taken them seriously, they'd gone unresolved. If I'd been able to accept her warnings then and discussed things in detail with her and sought a path of resolution,

maybe these problems could have been solved and amended slightly, or at the very least, the work wouldn't have gotten to such a terrible state.

March 14, 2023, Tuesday, Very Cloudy to Sunny

During one of my devotionals, I read some of God's words regarding my disposition of being averse to the truth and I became more aware of the seriousness of this problem. Almighty God says: **"In the church, there are those who think that making a big effort or doing a few risky things means they have accrued merit. In fact, according to their actions they are indeed worthy of commendation, but their disposition and attitude toward the truth are loathsome and repugnant. ... God does not loathe people's poor caliber, He does not loathe their foolishness, and He does not loathe that they have corrupt dispositions. What is it that God most loathes in people? It is when they are averse to the truth. If you are averse to the truth, then because of that alone, God will never find delight in you. This is set in stone. If you are averse to the truth, if you do not love the truth, if your attitude toward the truth is uncaring, contemptuous, and arrogant, or even repulsed, resistant, and rejective—if this is how you behave—then God is utterly disgusted with you, and you are dead in the water, beyond saving. If you really do love the truth in your heart, and it's just that you are of somewhat low caliber and lacking in insight, a bit foolish, and you often make mistakes, but you do not intend to do evil, and have simply done a few foolish things; if you are willing at heart to hear God's fellowship on the truth, and you long at heart for the truth; if the attitude you take in your treatment of the truth and God's words is one of sincerity and longing, and you can treasure and cherish God's words—this is enough. God likes such people. Even though you may be a bit foolish at times, God**

still likes you. God loves your heart, which longs for the truth, and He loves your sincere attitude toward the truth. So, God has mercy on you and is always granting grace to you. He does not consider your poor caliber or your foolishness, nor does He consider your transgressions. Because your attitude toward the truth is sincere and eager, and your heart is true, then—considering the trueness of your heart and this attitude of yours—He shall be ever merciful toward you, and the Holy Spirit shall work on you, and you shall have hope of salvation. On the other hand, if you are intransigent in your heart and self-indulgent, if you are averse to the truth, never heedful of God’s words and everything that involves the truth, and antagonistic and scornful from the depths of your heart, then what is God’s attitude toward you? Loathing, revulsion, and unceasing wrath” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. To Fulfill One’s Duty Well, Understanding the Truth Is Most Crucial). Having read God’s word I felt that God’s disposition is righteous and holy. God doesn’t despise people because they are foolish or lacking in caliber, and instead looks at their attitude toward the truth. If a person has great gifts and caliber and is able to do work, but they often reveal a disposition that is averse to the truth in their duties, and they are normally unable to accept the truth or reflect, then God will not like this person, no matter how great their caliber. God loves people who are willing to accept the truth, even if they lack caliber and cannot do great work. Seeing the standard by which God evaluates people, and comparing it with my behavior, I felt like I was in grave danger. I had been relying on my intelligence and caliber, and as a supervisor, I had been able to do some work and resolve some difficulties my team members were having with life entry, which made me feel like I knew what I was doing. But when others pointed out my problems, my pride took over, and I felt as if they were trying to belittle and humiliate me.

My attitude toward others' suggestions, positive things, and the truth had been contemptuous and arrogant, and I had disgusted God. I had already transgressed in my duties, and if I continued being so irrational and unrepentant, God would surely clear me out and eliminate me. This truly terrified me! I said a silent, earnest prayer to God, "Oh God, I wish to repent. I want to do my duties properly with my brothers and sisters, but my corrupt disposition is so serious. Please discipline me more and save me from the bonds of my corrupt disposition."

March 21, 2023, Tuesday, Sunny

Today, I read a passage of God's word that gave me a path of practice. God says: **"You must first resolve all the difficulties within yourself by relying on God. Put an end to your degenerate disposition and become able to truly understand your own condition and know how you should act; continue to fellowship about anything you do not understand. It is unacceptable for a person not to know themselves. Heal your own sickness first, and, by eating and drinking My words more often and contemplating them, live your life and do your deeds on the basis of My words; whether you are at home or elsewhere, you should allow God to wield power within you. Cast off the flesh and naturalness. Always let God's words have dominion within you. There is no need to worry that your life is not changing; with time, you will come to feel your disposition has changed a great deal. Before, you were eager to be in the limelight, you either obeyed no one or were ambitious, self-righteous, or prideful—these are things you will gradually be rid of. If you wish to cast them off right now, that is not possible! This is because your old self will not allow others to touch it, so deep are its roots. So, you must make a subjective effort, positively and actively submit to the**

work of the Holy Spirit, use your will to cooperate with God, and be willing to put My words into practice. ... Do not be self-righteous; take the strengths of others to offset your own deficiencies, watch how others live by God's words; and see whether their lives, actions, and speech are worth emulating. If you regard others as less than you, you are self-righteous, conceited, and of benefit to no one. What is vital now is to focus on life, to eat and drink more of My words, to experience My words, to know My words, to make My words truly become your life—these are the main things. If someone cannot live by God's words, can their life mature? No, it cannot. You must live by My words at all times and have My words as the code of conduct for life, so that you will feel that acting by that code is what God takes joy in, and acting otherwise is what God hates; and slowly, you will come to walk on the right track” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 22). God says: **“It is unacceptable for a person not to know themselves. Heal your own sickness first.”** The truth was that God had already made a path of practice very clear. When we are confronted with things, we should always come before God to reflect, know ourselves, and seek the truth to solve our problems. In the past, when others pointed out my problems, I'd immediately become hotheaded and unwilling to reflect, and I'd think “What you're saying isn't objective; that's not how it is,” or else, “You might have pointed out my problem, but you are not necessarily any better than me.” I'd argue back and be defiant, and not view the situation as being from God, so I set myself against others and ended up gaining nothing. The truth is, even though the person pointing out my problem may reveal corruption and may sometimes say things that aren't completely accurate, so long as they are partially in line with the facts in what they are correcting me on, I should accept it, reflect on myself, and

seek the truth relating to the resolution of this problem. This is an attitude of accepting the truth. Only by practicing this way can my arrogant disposition that is averse to the truth be resolved gradually.

April 10, 2023, Monday, Sunny

Today, the leader wrote to me about our slow progress in making videos, saying that we were just going through the motions and not being attentive in following up on this work, that we weren't looking into the reasons behind this slowness, and that we were neglecting our duties by doing so. My first reaction was to argue back, and I thought "We are resolving this problem, it's just a matter of time. Besides, those making the videos have actual difficulties with techniques, so can you really blame us?" I felt wronged, but I realized that I was starting to resist and not accept suggestions again, so I kept praying to God, "Oh God, I'm so rebellious! I keep being irrational and can't seek the truth to learn lessons. Oh God, please watch over my heart, so that I can accept the leader's guidance and help." After this, we went over the problem of slow video production together and finally found that our efficiency really was too low and that we were procrastinating too much. I usually just showered them with empty words to urge them on, but I never actually understood which parts they were slowing down on, which sections could be omitted, which parts were prone to getting stuck and wasting time, or how to correct the lax attitude some people had in their duties. By actually investigating and seeking the truth principles to resolve these issues, the work could progress at least twice as fast. I'd almost rejected others' suggestions again, and if I actually had, these problems would have remained unresolved, and the work would continue being delayed. The more things I experience, the more I feel just

how necessary it is to accept the advice of others and to reflect when things happen!

Looking back on my own experience, I am filled with a lot of emotion and see just how wise God is! Had Li Ran not pointed out my problem, I would never have realized just how serious my disposition of being averse to the truth was, and without God's revelation and words of exposure, I wouldn't have known to reflect on myself either. I would have just kept going further down the wrong path, and in the end, I would have been rejected by my brothers and sisters, and God would have eliminated me. It was God's wonderful work that revealed my corruption and ugliness and it was God's severe words of judgment that exposed my corrupt disposition, and allowed me to see my satanic disposition that was averse to the truth, and to wake up and turn around. This was all God's love! Though I have still not changed much, I am willing to accept the judgment and chastisement of God's word in the future so that I can gradually change.

75. The Torture I Endured

By Lin Guang, China

At around 10 a.m. on March 20, 2014, I suddenly received a call from my wife while I was out running errands in which she urgently said, “Officers from the police station have come to arrest you. Do not come home!” I immediately became nervous upon hearing this and thought, “Where can I go? If I go to a brother or sister’s house, I’ll definitely make trouble for them. My only choice is to seek refuge at a friend or relative’s house.” I eventually decided to go to my daughter’s house. At around 2 p.m. on the same day, three plainclothes officers burst into my daughter’s house and one of them yelled, “You’re Lin Guang, aren’t you? We’re from the police station and we’ve been investigating you for years.” Without showing any identification, they then proceeded to force me out to their sedan. At the time, I was quite scared that they would beat me and force me to give up information about the church, so I prayed to God, “Oh God! Please give me faith and strength. No matter what the officers do to me, I will not be a Judas and betray You.” After praying, I was able to calm down.

At the police station, two officers immediately forced me into a tiger chair, locked my hands to the chair, took off my shoes and socks and affixed my feet with the leg irons. In a sinister, hateful voice, the police station director told me, “The order to arrest you today came directly from the provincial public security department and they requested that I arrest you myself. You must really be something! You better get talking quick and tell us everything you know!” With that, he placed one-inch half-length photos of over ten people in front of me and went through them one by one, asking me if I knew any of the people pictured. I saw a sister that I

recognized and hurriedly replied, “I don’t know any of these people.” He then pointed at some items collected from my house including two Bibles, one copy of **The Word Appears in the Flesh**, several receipts for safekeeping books of God’s words, and 7,400 yuan and said, “This is clear evidence that you believe in Almighty God and are working against the CCP!” He then picked up the receipts and asked me, “Where did you put these books?” I became very nervous when I saw him holding those receipts and thought, “Those receipts are for over a thousand books. If I don’t tell him, he certainly won’t let me go, but if I do tell him, won’t that make me a Judas?” Realizing this, I hurriedly prayed to God, “Oh God! Please protect my heart and allow me to be quiet and calm before You. No matter what the police do to me, I will not be a Judas and will not sell out my brothers and sisters!” After prayer, I recalled this passage of God’s words: **“Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). I could sense God’s authority through His words. All is in God’s hands and He holds sovereignty over all things! Wasn’t the fact that I relocated the books I had been keeping just a week ago a sign of God’s protection? Realizing this, I confidently replied, “Those books have already been passed on.” An officer continued his questioning, asking, “Where does the person who received the books live? What is their name? Who is their leader?” I replied, “I don’t know.” He glared at me and yelled, “Are you going to tell me or not? Don’t get smart just because I’ve been lenient with you!” He then marched over to me and viciously slapped me across the left and right sides of my face. Then two other officers came over and took turns slapping me. They slapped me at least over ten times and I began to see stars, my ears rang and my face stung with pain. Seeing that I still

wasn't speaking, an officer picked up a 2.5 cm thick electric cable and whipped me over ten times across the back, causing me to convulse all over with pain. I prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to give me faith and the will to endure suffering. A few of the officers viciously growled, "Take his clothes off and beat him hard. We'll see if he talks then!" They then forcibly took off my clothes and continued whipping me while yelling, "Are you gonna talk or not?" They whipped me at least eight or nine times, with each crack sending searing pain throughout my body. But no matter how they grilled me, I didn't say a word. Two other officers then came up and took turns slapping me across the face. They beat me until I felt so faint that I couldn't open my eyes.

After some time, an officer came in with a basin full of water. He threw a pair of dirty pants into the water and then used a stick to lift the pants out of the water and splashed the water onto my head and body nonstop, leaving me feeling cold and in pain. Seeing that I still wouldn't talk, they took a bamboo rod about the girth of a pinky finger and began pressing and twisting it into my nipples for two to three minutes, eliciting searing pain. I clenched my fists and gritted my teeth, but I felt like I couldn't take it much longer, so I prayed to God, "Oh God! Please give me faith and the will to endure suffering. Allow me to overcome this suffering and stand firm in witness to You." During prayer, I thought of how the Lord Jesus was beaten by soldiers until His whole body was covered with cuts and bruises, forced to trudge to the site of His crucifixion in shackles, and was finally brutally nailed up on the cross. The Lord Jesus sacrificed His life to redeem mankind. God's love is so great! God's love deeply motivated me. Thinking of how Peter, too, was crucified upside down, it occurred to me that the suffering I was going through was very negligible by comparison. I knew I had to emulate Peter, stand firm in my witness, and

no matter how the police tortured me, even if it meant sacrificing my life, I had to satisfy God. Realizing all this, I gained faith, felt the pain in my body reduce, and began to experience a sense of calm. After that, the police continued alternating between torturing me with the bamboo rod and electric cable, but when they saw I still wouldn't talk, they yelled, "You're a stubborn one! We've never had someone as stubborn as you before! Even a hero would've caved by this point! What is it that sustains you?" I was so happy when I heard them say that. I knew that God had given me faith and the will to endure suffering, allowing me to overcome the torture. I felt that God was with me at my side and I had more faith—I would stand firm in my testimony to God even if it meant my death. I resolutely stated, "It is God's word that sustains me!" Hearing that, the officers immediately intensified their torture, slapping me, pressing and twisting at my nipples, and beating me with the bamboo rod on my hands until they turned black and blue and went numb. An officer then said to me, "If you don't talk, we will beat you to death tonight. No one will care if we kill you. You believers should all be killed!" I became enraged when he said that and thought, "Even if you kill me, I won't say a word. Don't expect to get the slightest bit of information out of me!"

Later on, seeing that I still wouldn't talk, the police used the bamboo rod to press and twist into my big toes on both feet and used an electric cable to whip me over my feet. They kept alternating between whipping me, pressing and twisting into my nipples and big toes with the bamboo rod and slapping me. I was in so much pain that I ground my teeth, making a chattering sound. A police officer then said, "If you don't talk, we'll parade you through the streets tomorrow. Your relatives, friends, and family will all hate you and reject you. If you tell us, we won't let anyone know you were arrested and you'll save face." I realized that this was Satan's sinister plot

and I thought of what the Lord Jesus said: **“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”** (Matthew 5:10). Being mocked, insulted and slandered as I had been for believing in God were all forms of persecution for the sake of righteousness. This was not a humiliation, this was a glorious thing. No matter what other people thought, all that mattered to me was satisfying God. Realizing this, I just ignored the officer. Then another officer threatened me, saying, “Are you going to talk or not? If you don’t, we’ll beat you to death tonight and throw you out onto the highway. The cars will turn you into minced meat and no one will ever know what happened!” Hearing this, I thought, “These officers are truly malicious and there is nothing they won’t do. If they kill me, no one will ever know.” I thought of my old father who was in his 80s at home, as well as my wife, who suffered from many illnesses. “If they kill me, how will my father and wife take care of themselves?” I felt awful when this occurred to me and so I prayed to God. Later, I recalled this passage of God’s words: **“In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). God’s words helped me realize that Satan was trying to use the weakness of my flesh and my affection for my family to make me sell out my brothers and sisters and betray God. I couldn’t fall for its tricks. I then recalled something else that the Lord Jesus said: **“He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it”** (Matthew 10:39). God’s words gave me faith and strength. Even if they beat me to death, my soul would be in God’s hands, and even if it meant sacrificing my life, I had to stand firm in my

testimony for God. Man has no control over his fate, and God holds sovereignty over our destinies, so my family's future life was also in God's hands. I was willing to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, so I prayed to God, "Oh God! All things and events are in Your hands, including my own life. No matter how the police torture me, even if it means my death, I will never betray You or sell out my brothers and sisters."

Seeing that I still wouldn't talk, the police took the ragged pants from the basin of water and splashed me on the head several times, twisted the bamboo rod into my nipples and big toes, and beat me hard over the instep of my feet. Each time they hit me, it would hurt so much that my whole body would go numb, my heart would convulse and I'd become short of breath. I grit my teeth, silently prayed to God, and still didn't say a word. An officer then took a stinky sock, threw it in the basin to let it soak up the dirty water, and then rubbed it on my mouth. I shut my mouth tight, so he just rubbed it on my lips. Then, when I slightly relaxed my mouth, he stuck the sock in my mouth and began rubbing it on my teeth while saying, "Here, let me rinse out your mouth for you!" They then proceeded to take a basin of cold water from the refrigerator and splashed it on my head. After that, when I still refused to talk, they took a hammer and used the wooden handle to pry my mouth open and then brought over a half bowl of hot pepper oil and tried to pour it down my throat. When they found they couldn't get the oil in because I had shut my mouth as hard as I could, they just rubbed it on my lips and the cuts on my nipples, not stopping until they had used all the oil. The searing pain was nearly unbearable and I continually trembled and shook in the tiger chair. My feet chafed against the iron shackles and eventually opened up two cuts on my heels that began to bleed. The pain was so bad that I thought I'd be better off dead and felt

incredibly hopeless. I thought, “If you’re going to beat me, beat me to death and put me out of this misery.” When I began thinking about wanting to die, I realized this was wrong—if I died, how could I bear testimony for God? At that point, I thought of a passage of God’s words: **“You can’t die yet. You must clench your fists and resolutely continue to live. You must live a life for God. When people have truth within them, they have this resolve and never again desire to die. When death threatens you, you will say, ‘Oh God, I am unwilling to die. I still do not know You. I still have not repaid Your love. I cannot die until I come to know You well.’ ... If you don’t understand God’s intention, and you merely think about suffering, then the more you think about it, the more uncomfortable it becomes and the more negative you feel, like your path of life is coming to an end. You will begin to suffer the torment of death. If you put your heart and all your effort into the truth, and you are able to understand the truth, then your heart will be brightened, and you will experience enjoyment. You will find peace and joy within your heart in life, and when illness strikes or death looms, you will say, ‘I haven’t obtained the truth yet, so I can’t die. I must expend well for God, testify to God well, and repay God’s love. How I die in the end doesn’t matter, because I will have lived a satisfactory life. No matter what, I can’t die yet. I must persist and live on’”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man’s Nature). God’s words had a deep, touching impact on me. God was using this hardship to perfect my faith and love and allow me to attain the truth. I wanted to die and be spared the misery after suffering just a little bit—where was my testimony? I thought of how no matter how much Peter suffered and underwent hardship, he never complained about God, instead praying to seek God’s intention, submitting to everything that came from God and ultimately achieving the

utmost love for God, submitting unto death, being crucified upside down for God and bearing a wonderful and resounding testimony. I had to emulate Peter—no matter how much I suffered, I should go on living and stand firm in my witness to humiliate Satan with my every last remaining breath. After that, an officer brought in a fan, set it to the highest setting, and let it blow on me for over ten minutes, making me so cold that I began to shiver. I thought to myself, “No matter what method you use, I will never speak.” They tortured me in this way from 3 p.m. until 4:30 a.m. of the following morning. Despite not getting a single word from me, they were finally so exhausted that they gave up and left.

On the morning of the second day, they took me to the detention house. My feet were so swollen that I couldn’t put on my shoes, and could only limp along with my feet halfway stuck into the shoes. Each step caused me searing pain. When an officer had me take off my clothes for examination and saw that I was covered with cuts and bruises, he asked, “Who beat you like this?” I was about to reply, when the deputy director hurriedly cut in, saying, “Those are bruises from gua sha, not from a beating.” When I entered the cell I was being detained in, an overweight inmate told me, “New arrivals need to be cleaned from head to foot with six basins of water. These are the rules.” Hearing this, I felt a bit nervous and thought, “It’s so cold out and it will certainly be freezing and painful to be washed with six basins worth of water. How will I endure that?” But to my surprise, when I took off my clothes and he saw I was covered in cuts and bruises, he told the other inmates, “His back, feet, and face are all black and blue, he has deep, blood-soaked gouges on both heels. He’s been beaten too severely, so he can be spared the six basins of water.” I felt deeply relieved and continually thanked God in my heart.

At 2 p.m. on the third day of my detention, I suddenly developed a bad headache, my heart began to race and I passed out on my concrete bed. At the time, I had a tight feeling in my chest like it had been bound up with rope and a heavy feeling like a large stone slab was weighing down on it. It was extremely uncomfortable and my headache was so bad that it felt like my head was going to explode. An inmate hurriedly called over to an officer who felt my heart and pulse and said, "His heart's beating too fast, I can't even count the beats." Then, they sent me to the hospital, and upon examination my heart was found to be beating at 240 bpm and I had had a heart attack. I was admitted to the hospital, given an oxygen mask, and injected with a cardiogenic medicine. My hospital stay lasted four days and because the police were worried I'd try to escape, they handcuffed me to the bed and placed two armed guards at my door. On the night of the fourth day, they took me back to the detention house. Several of the officers asked about my situation, to which the officer that accompanied me just shook his head and said, "This one's done for, he's useless." I remembered hearing other inmates say that inmates with serious injuries or diseases could be released after being held for around ten days or so. I thought that since I was so sick, I probably wouldn't be held for too long and that perhaps God was opening up a way for me. I prayed to God, telling Him that I was willing to put my illness in His hands. No matter whether I lived or died, whether I continued to be incarcerated or was set free, I was willing to submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. For the next few days, I spent all day lying on my bed in severe pain, and cellmates took turns taking care of me for a week. I knew that God had orchestrated and arranged people, events, and things to help me and I continually gave thanks to Him! Because I had advanced heart illness and might stop breathing at any time, the officers at the detention house worried they'd be held responsible if I

died while incarcerated, so they called my wife in after twenty-nine days of detention to arrange for my bail pending trial and released me to go home. I remember as I was leaving, the deputy director warned me, “We’ve released you, but you’re still under our control. Your wife is your guarantor. If you make any contact with believers going forward, we will arrest you and your wife next time. From now on, you will report every month to the local police station.” At the time, I didn’t reply and just thought, “You can monitor and control me, but you can’t control my God-following heart. I will continue to believe in God after being released.”

After being released from the detention house, my illness continued to worsen and episodes became increasingly frequent. Each time I had an episode, the pain would radiate from my heart to my back and from my spine up into my head. My headaches would get so bad that it felt like someone was tightening a vice on my head and my ears rang louder than a factory machine. My heart would feel extremely tight like it had been bound up in a rope and it would be difficult to breathe. I could only get some relief by taking deep, slow breaths. If the episodes didn’t improve on their own, I would have to go to the hospital for injections. I couldn’t do any manual labor and even carrying a basin of water was too much for my heart. Also, due to taking medicine for a long period of time, I developed very serious stomach issues. I was more or less a cripple and couldn’t do the slightest bit of work. What’s more, the medical bills put a huge strain on my family and made life extremely difficult. Whenever I thought about how as a man, I was unable to work and provide for my family, was a burden on my family, and how I had to suffer through the pain and torment of illness every single day, I felt incredibly tormented and miserable. Whenever I suffered like this, I thought of the experiences of Job and Peter. I read this passage of God’s words: **“You undergo the trials of Job, and at the same**

time you undergo the trials of Peter. When Job was tested, he stood witness, and in the end, Jehovah was revealed to him. Only after he stood witness was he worthy of seeing the face of God. Why is it said: ‘I hide from the land of filth but show Myself to the holy kingdom’? That means that only when you are holy and stand witness can you have the dignity to see the face of God. If you cannot stand witness for Him, you do not have the dignity to see His face. If you retreat or make complaints against God in the face of refinements, thus failing to stand witness for Him and becoming Satan’s laughing stock, then you will not gain the appearance of God. If you are like Job, who in the midst of trials cursed his own flesh and did not complain against God, and was able to detest his own flesh without complaining or sinning through his words, then you will be standing witness. When you undergo refinements to a certain degree and can still be like Job, utterly submissive in front of God and without other requirements of Him or your own notions, then God will appear to you” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement).

Pondering over God’s words, I realized that despite the fact that the CCP’s torment had left me riddled with illness, God was using this environment to perfect my faith and love. He was looking to see if I would submit to this orchestration and arrangement and stand firm in my testimony for Him through this refinement. When Job underwent trials, losing all his property and seeing his own children perish all within one day, and later breaking out in boils, he maintained a God-fearing heart and despite meeting with such suffering and hardship, he never complained about God and even praised God’s name. Then there was Peter, who underwent hundreds of trials, but never lost his faith in God and eventually was crucified upside down for God, submitting to God until his death. The suffering, trials, and refinement

they underwent were many times greater than what I was going through, but they still never rebelled against or resisted God, and were able to willingly submit to Him without complaints regardless of whether they received blessings or suffered misfortune. I was willing to emulate them and refrain from complaining about God no matter how great the suffering and refinement I faced. I would resolutely stand firm in my testimony to God.

Through undergoing this persecution and arrest, I came to clearly see the demonic, truth-hating and God-hating essence of the CCP. They are just as God says: **“This gang of accomplices in crime! They come down into the mortal realm to indulge in pleasures and cause a commotion, stirring things up so much that the world becomes a fickle and inconstant place and the heart of man is filled with panic and unease, and they have toyed with man so much that his appearance has become that of an inhuman beast of the field, supremely ugly, and from which the last trace of the original holy man has been lost. Furthermore, they even wish to assume sovereign power on earth. They impede the work of God so much that it can barely inch forward, and they close man off as tightly as walls of copper and steel. Having committed so many grievous sins and caused so many disasters, are they still expecting something other than chastisement?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (7)). God created us, so believing in and worshipping God is perfectly natural and justified, but the CCP uses every method at its disposal to persecute and arrest believers, force them to betray God and follow it, and it fantasizes about having control over mankind, God’s creation. How shameless it is! These demons will ultimately be cursed and punished by God! In the course of my experience, I also witnessed God’s miraculous deeds, almightiness, and sovereignty. Each time that I felt like I couldn’t bear the suffering inflicted by their torture and torment, I would

pray to and rely upon God and the suffering of my flesh would abate. When I felt miserable and negative, God's words guided me to be strong and not be constrained by death. God also orchestrated and arranged people, events, and things to help me, allowing me to sense that He was at my side, taking mercy on my weakness. This was all God's love for me and I now have more faith in God than ever.

76. Self-Reflecting After the Reassignment of Duties

By Aubry, South Korea

In September 2020, I was responsible for coordinating the post-production work of hymn audio. I took care of all the big and small matters in the team, and the team leader consulted with me on various issues. The brothers and sisters were also willing to discuss their states and difficulties with me. The team leader said, “Over the years, many coordinators have come and gone in our team, but you have been the longest-serving one here. You can manage all aspects of the work well, and are quite capable of coordinating.” Sometimes, when I fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters, I would hear some of them say, “Fellowshipping with you makes my mind so much clearer.” Every time I heard such words, I felt very satisfied. I thought that I was the most suitable person for this duty, and that it best embodied the value of my existence. Thus, I loved this duty very much.

Unexpectedly, in January 2023, due to work needs, I was reassigned to the song recording team. I had not recorded any songs for over four years, so I had to learn some skills and techniques from scratch. I became the least skilled person in the team. Previously, as a coordinator, other team members would come to me for advice on various matters. Now, I had to ask others for everything. Anyone in the team could come and guide me in my work and point out my deficiencies, which made me feel very uncomfortable. I thought, “I used to be the one arranging tasks for others. But now, anyone can direct me. Where can I hide my face? What will the brothers and sisters think of me? That won’t do. I need to practice singing diligently and strive to improve my skills as quickly as possible, so that others won’t constantly

point out my problems.” Despite my efforts, my singing techniques still had many issues. The same happened during the shooting of choir videos. Since I hadn’t participated in a shoot for a long time, my expressions appeared unnatural. Even though I practiced hard, I could only stand in the last row as part of the background, with barely any shots capturing me throughout the song. This made me feel even more upset. I thought, “I can’t sing well; I can’t perform well. I’m the worst in every aspect. No matter how hard I try, I can’t catch up with others. Am I destined to remain in the background forever? What is the value of doing this duty then? How can I face anyone?” Thinking of my past “glory” and comparing it to my current “downfall,” I cried out of grievance. This situation made me so painful and repressed. I lost all enthusiasm and even thought of leaving the team. I increasingly missed my days as a coordinator, always fantasizing about returning to that role one day. That way, I wouldn’t be in such pain. Then I could do my duty with ease, arrange others’ tasks in style, and continue enjoying being looked up to by the brothers and sisters. I knew my state was not right. In the pain, I came before God to pray, asking Him to lead me out of this state.

During my devotionals, I kept pondering: It’s normal to be unfamiliar with the skills in a new duty. The brothers and sisters also fellowshiped with me, encouraging me not to worry, and saying that with practice, I would improve over time. But why did what seemed normal to others often make me feel so negative and even want to run away? I read these words of God: **“Let no person think of themselves as perfect, distinguished, noble, or distinct from others; all this is brought about by man’s arrogant disposition and ignorance. Always thinking of oneself as set apart—this is caused by an arrogant disposition; never being able to accept their shortcomings, and never being able to confront their**

mistakes and failures—this is caused by an arrogant disposition; never permitting others to be higher than themselves, or to be better than themselves—this is caused by an arrogant disposition; never allowing others’ strengths to surpass or exceed their own—this is caused by an arrogant disposition; never permitting others to have better thoughts, suggestions, and views than themselves, and, when they discover that others are better than themselves, becoming negative, not wishing to speak, feeling distressed and dejected, and becoming upset—all of this is caused by an arrogant disposition. An arrogant disposition can make you protective of your reputation, unable to accept others’ corrections, unable to confront your shortcomings, and unable to accept your own failures and mistakes. More than that, when someone is better than you, it can cause hatred and jealousy to emerge in your heart, and you can feel constrained, such that you do not wish to do your duty and become perfunctory in performing it. An arrogant disposition can cause these behaviors and practices to emerge in you” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). I compared myself to God’s words and reflected. I came to understand my nature was too arrogant. Over the past two years, I had gained some experience in my coordination duty and achieved some results. This made me think I was smart and capable in my work, always the leader in any group. I believed that I should be the one arranging work for others and not the other way around. Even after I was reassigned to a duty that required learning new skills, I felt that I had to learn faster than everyone else. Other team members had struggled with their singing and had taken months of training or even longer to gradually harmonize their voices with everyone. However, I expected myself to catch up with them within a few weeks. After failing to meet this expectation, I felt upset and negative. During

filming, when I saw other brothers and sisters with better expressions and conditions than mine, I also felt uncomfortable. When I wasn't put in many shots, I became negative and even thought of giving up my singing duty. I couldn't keep going in an environment that seemed ordinary to others. Even a small setback or difficulty made me want to shirk my responsibilities and abandon my duty. I was truly arrogant and lacking in reason! When the brothers and sisters offered guidance and help, I wasn't able to treat it properly, even feeling that it wounded my pride. I realized that my distress and negativity weren't because I hadn't done my duty well enough to satisfy God, but because I was the worst in the group and couldn't get the brothers' and sisters' admiration and praise. I then read another passage of God's words: **"What is their motive in making people think highly of them? (To be given status in such people's minds.) When you are given status in the mind of someone else, then when they are in your company, they are deferential toward you, and especially polite when they talk to you. They always look up to you, they always let you go first in all things, they give way to you, and they flatter and obey you. In all things, they seek you out and let you make decisions. And you get a sense of enjoyment from this—you feel that you are stronger and better than anyone else. Everyone likes this feeling. This is the feeling of having status in someone's heart; people wish to indulge in this. This is why people vie for status, and all wish to be given status in others' hearts, to be esteemed and worshiped by others. If they could not derive such enjoyment from it, they would not pursue status. For example, if you do not have status in someone's mind, they would engage with you on an equal footing, treating you as an equal. They would contradict you when necessary, they would not be courteous or respectful toward you, and might even leave before you have finished**

speaking. Would you feel put out? You do not like it when people treat you like this; you like it when they flatter you, look up to you, and worship you at every moment. You like it when you are the center of everything, everything revolves around you, and everyone listens to you, looks up to you, and submits to your direction. Is this not a desire to reign as a king, to have power? Your words and actions are driven by the pursuit and acquisition of status, and you contend, grasp, and compete with others for it. Your goal is to seize a position, and have God's chosen people listen to you, support you, and worship you. Once you have taken hold of that position, you have then acquired power and can enjoy the benefits of status, admiration from others, and all other advantages that come with that position" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). After reading God's words, I was deeply moved and immediately understood that my reluctance to let go of my previous coordination duty stemmed from my deep desire to be looked up to and my craving for the benefits of status. Reflecting on my time in the previous team, when I arranged everything well, I received everyone's praise. In addition, the brothers and sisters respected my opinions, the team leader discussed all matters with me, and everyone spoke to me very politely. In such an environment, I felt strongly that I was important, receiving attention and admiration from everyone. I greatly enjoyed that feeling. After starting the singing duty, I couldn't keep up with the other team members in various regards. No one asked for my opinions or consulted me on work matters anymore, and instead, everyone frequently gave me suggestions, so I wanted to escape this environment. To improve my skill level, I would get up early and rest late to practice singing, putting in more effort than others, hoping that one day I would regain the admiration and praise of others. Even if I couldn't be the most

outstanding, at the very least, I wouldn't be ignored in any aspect like I was now. I knew well that improving my singing was a gradual process, but I was still eager for quick results. When I didn't see significant progress after a period of effort, I became negative and lost all enthusiasm. Now I realized that my desire wasn't simply to perform the songs well but to quickly improve my skill level, so that I could escape the current situation of being neglected and overlooked, and become someone valued in the group. I compared my various manifestations to what God's words exposed, and I realized that I had been unwilling to be directed by others, unwilling to be ignored, and always wanted to have the final say and the authority to take command in a group. I sought to be supported and looked up to, wanting to secure a place in everyone's hearts. Wasn't this walking the path of antichrists? I felt very fearful and hurriedly came before God to pray, "Oh God, I have been intransigent and rebellious lately. Just because I couldn't receive the admiration and attention of the brothers and sisters, I wanted to shirk my responsibilities and abandon my duty, and couldn't submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements. Now I realize that the path I am on is wrong. I am willing to repent. Please guide me to a deeper understanding of myself."

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"For antichrists, reputation and status are their life, and their lifelong goal. In all they do, their first consideration is: 'What will happen to my status? And to my reputation? Will doing this give me a good reputation? Will it elevate my status in people's minds?' That is the first thing they think about, which is ample proof that they have the disposition and essence of antichrists; they would not consider these problems otherwise. It can be said that for antichrists, reputation and status are not some additional requirement, much less something extraneous that they**

could do without. They are part of the nature of antichrists, they are in their bones, in their blood, they are innate to them. Antichrists are not indifferent toward whether they possess reputation and status; this is not their attitude. Then, what is their attitude? Reputation and status are intimately connected to their daily lives, to their daily state, to what they pursue on a daily basis. And so for antichrists, status and reputation are their life. No matter how they live, no matter what environment they live in, no matter what work they do, no matter what they pursue, what their goals are, what their life's direction is, it all revolves around having a good reputation and a high status. And this aim does not change; they can never put aside such things. This is the true face of antichrists, and their essence. You could put them in a primeval forest deep in the mountains, and still they would not put aside their pursuit of reputation and status. You can put them among any group of people, and all they can think about is still reputation and status. Although antichrists also believe in God, they see the pursuit of reputation and status as equivalent to faith in God and give it equal weight. Which is to say, as they walk the path of faith in God, they also pursue their own reputation and status. It can be said that in antichrists' hearts, they believe that pursuit of the truth in their faith in God is the pursuit of reputation and status; the pursuit of reputation and status is also the pursuit of the truth, and to gain reputation and status is to gain the truth and life. If they feel that they have no reputation, gains, or status, that no one admires them, or esteems them, or follows them, then they are very disappointed, they believe there is no point in believing in God, no value to it, and they say to themselves, 'Is such faith in god a failure? Is it hopeless?' They often deliberate such things in their hearts, they deliberate how they can carve a place

out for themselves in the house of God, how they can have a lofty reputation in the church, so that people listen when they talk, and support them when they act, and follow them wherever they go; so that they have the final say in the church, and fame, gain, and status—they really focus on such things in their hearts. These are what such people pursue” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). From God’s words, I understood that antichrists always prioritize their own reputation and status in everything they do. They treat reputation and status as their lifelong goals. Wasn’t my pursuit the same as that of antichrists? Looking back, ever since I was a child, my parents and teachers taught me that life should be lived with ambition, that in any group, I should strive to be the best and become an example for others to follow, and that only in this way can my life have value. I remembered that as a child, before participating in various competitions, I would first assess my chances of winning. If I was confident of winning, I would participate; if my chances were slim, I would rather not participate than risk losing face. In my mind, there was no concept of “Participating is what counts,” only “Winning is everything.” This approach had carried over into my duties in God’s house. I always wanted to do the duties I was skilled at, as it would show my work capability and earn others’ approval. I was unwilling to take on tasks I wasn’t good at, not wanting the brothers and sisters to see my ignorant and clumsy side. I could see that every revelation and action of mine revolved around reputation and status. What I revealed was exactly the disposition of antichrists. When I had reputation and status, I felt energized in my work, and found the duty valuable and meaningful. Once I lost that reputation and status, I likewise lost the desire to do my duty. Making considerations and plans for my own reputation and status came as naturally to me as eating and sleeping every day. Such satanic philosophies as “A man leaves his

name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies,” and “Man struggles upward; water flows downward” had deeply rooted themselves in my heart, becoming the goals and standards for how I acted. If I did not repent and change, sooner or later, I would be revealed and eliminated by God for following the path of antichrists in pursuit of reputation and status.

At a gathering, I heard a passage of God’s words, which gave me a clear path of practice, and an understanding of God’s requirements for humanity. Almighty God says: **“Since you wish to remain peacefully in God’s house as a member, you should first learn how to be a good created being and fulfill your duties according to your place. In God’s house, you would then become a created being that lives up to its name. Created being is your outward identity and title, and it should come with specific manifestations and substance. It’s not just about having the title; but since you are a created being, you should fulfill the duties of a created being. Since you are a created being, you should fulfill the responsibilities of such. So, what are the duties and responsibilities of a created being? God’s word clearly lays out the duties, obligations, and responsibilities of created beings, doesn’t it? From today onward, you are a genuine member of God’s house, that is to say, you acknowledge yourself as one of the created beings of God. Consequently, from today, you should reconsider your life plans. You should no longer pursue but should let go of the ideals, desires, and goals you previously set for your life. Instead, you should change your identity and perspective in order to plan the life goals and direction that a created being should have. First and foremost, your goals and direction should not be to become a leader, or to lead or excel in any industry, or to become a renowned figure who carries out a certain task or masters a particular skill. Your**

goal should be to accept your duty from God, that is, to know what work you should be doing now, at this moment, and to understand what duty you need to perform. You need to ask what God requires of you and what duty has been arranged for you in His house. You should understand and gain clarity on the principles that should be understood, laid hold of, and followed regarding that duty. If you can't remember them, you can write them down on paper or record them on your computer. Take the time to review them and ponder over them. As a member of created beings, your primary life goal should be to fulfill your duty as a created being and be a qualified created being. This is the most fundamental life goal you should have. Second and more specific is how to fulfill your duty as a created being and be a qualified created being. Of course, any goals or directions related to your reputation, status, vanity, future, and so on should be relinquished" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (7)). God requires every created being to fulfill their duties according to their places and to know what their current work and duties are. Any goals related to their own reputation, status, or future should be forsaken. My current duty is singing. What I should do is focus more on studying singing skills and techniques, and strive to improve my singing as soon as possible. I should not cling to the glory of my previous role as a coordinator, nor be preoccupied with concerns about how my reputation and status are affected while practicing singing. These are not manifestations of being down-to-earth in doing duties. Understanding this, I tried my best to practice according to God's words, focusing on addressing my corrupt disposition and fallacious viewpoints in the process of practicing singing. Whenever I was concerned about my face and status and hesitant to sing openly, I silently prayed to God, asking Him to guide and help me put down my pride and status.

Although sometimes I still felt despondent and upset about not singing well, through eating and drinking God's words, I could be clearly aware that my view on pursuit was wrong. God does not require humans to be leaders or outstanding figures in any industry, but rather tells people to uphold their duties and responsibilities. Realizing this, I quickly adjusted my negative emotions, and became less constrained in my singing. After some time, our supervisor said that I made some progress in singing and allowed me to join the recording. Seeing this small improvement in my skills, I felt very happy. And I realized that progress in the skills is closely connected to personal life entry. When I was focused on my reputation and status, I felt bound and constrained in everything, and could not feel God's guidance in my duty. But when I was willing to set aside my pride and status and practice my skills earnestly, I unknowingly discovered some paths of practice.

Through this experience, I truly realized that pursuing reputation and status, rather than the truth, did not help me do my duty well. Instead, it had an impact on church work. I also realized that this reassignment in my duty was God's great protection for me. It allowed me to see my corruption and deficiencies, find my proper place, submit, and do my duty with peace of mind. Thank God for His salvation to me!

77. Is It Really Just Bad Luck When Things Go Wrong?

By Cheng Nuo, China

In April 2023, I was responsible for the gospel work in the church. After a period of time, the leader held a gathering with us and fellowshipped some truths on preaching the gospel. I thought they were wonderful. If I thoroughly fellowshipped those truths with the gospel preachers, it would be easier to solve the religious people's notions, which would be very beneficial for the gospel work. Afterward, I quickly planned gatherings to fellowship with the gospel preachers. However, at that time, many brothers and sisters from a church I was responsible for were arrested. Among the brothers and sisters I needed to meet, some lost contact, while some had security concerns and could not come. Reluctantly, I had to arrange gatherings with the brothers and sisters from other churches. When I tried to arrange it with a brother, he replied that he had an emergency to handle and couldn't attend the gathering in the next two days. I thought, "Why am I so unlucky? Even arranging people to attend a gathering is so difficult. Every time there's a critical moment, various problems come up. Why can't things go smoothly?" Soon after, I received a letter from the leader, saying that the churches in other places had already finished fellowshipping and started implementation. They inquired about the progress on my end. I was envious and worried, thinking, "Why are they so lucky? Their work is going so smoothly, while the churches in my scope haven't made any progress yet. Will the leader think that I am incapable and dragging my feet in the work?" With these thoughts, I became very irritated, thinking, "I also want to do my work well. Why doesn't God let me work smoothly? If it is not this person with safety concerns, then it is

another person too busy to find time. Everything seems to pile up all at once!” Faced with this situation, I felt helpless and demotivated about my duty. Afterward, I wrote to a sister from another church, asking her to arrange for a gathering and inform me of the time. But unexpectedly, the messenger was delayed on the way. By the time I received her reply, I had missed the scheduled meeting time. I thought, “Why am I so unlucky? Just when I managed to arrange with people to attend the gathering, I missed the gathering time. The gathering will be postponed for a few more days.” In those two days, I felt very anxious, thinking, “I’ve made a strong commitment to a work plan. But now, after such a long time, I haven’t even met with anyone. How will I respond to the leader when they ask about my work progress? Will they think I am dragging my feet in the work if they find out that I haven’t started implementation yet?” Unexpectedly, two days later, the leader sent me a letter saying that the CCP had launched a new round of nationwide roundup, resulting in the arrests of many church leaders and workers. I was told not to arrange gatherings with anyone for the time being. I complained in my heart, “I’ve just managed to arrange with some people to come, and now I can’t convene the gathering. This makes the work even harder to carry out!” Facing all this, I felt very frustrated, thinking, “I also want to do a good job, but why did everything go wrong when I implemented the work? Why did God not provide protection? It seems that my luck is just not good.” The more I thought about it, the more I felt I was unlucky, with everything going wrong. That night, I tossed and turned in bed and couldn’t sleep. I prayed to God and sought His intention. I thought of God’s words about exposing people’s pursuit of good luck, so I found and read that chapter of God’s words.

Almighty God says: **“What is the problem with people who always think that they are unlucky? They always use the standard of luck to**

measure whether their actions are right or wrong, and to weigh up which path they should take, the things that they should experience, and any problems that they face. Is that right or wrong? (Wrong.) They describe bad things as unlucky and good things as lucky or advantageous. Is this perspective right or wrong? (Wrong.) Measuring things from this kind of perspective is wrong. It is an extreme and incorrect method and standard for measuring things. This kind of method often leads people to sink into depression, and it often makes them feel uneasy, and that nothing ever goes their way, and that they never get what they want, which eventually leads them to feel constantly anxious, irritable, and uneasy. When these negative emotions go unresolved, these people constantly sink into depression and feel that God does not favor them. They think that God treats others with grace but not them, and that God takes care of others but not them. 'Why do I always feel uneasy and anxious? Why do bad things always happen to me? Why do good things never come my way? Just once is all I'm asking for!' When you view things with this kind of erroneous way of thinking and perspective, you will fall into the trap of good and bad luck. When you are continually falling into this trap, you will constantly feel depressed. In the midst of this depression, you will be particularly sensitive to whether the things that befall you are lucky or unlucky. When this happens, it proves that this perspective and idea of good and bad luck has taken control of you. When you are controlled by this kind of perspective, your views and attitude toward people, events, and things are no longer within the range of the conscience and reason of normal humanity, but have fallen into a sort of extreme. When you fall into this extreme, you will not emerge from your depression. You will keep getting depressed time and time again, and

even if you do not normally feel depressed, as soon as something goes wrong, as soon as you feel that something unlucky has happened, you will immediately sink into depression. This depression will affect your normal judgment and decision-making, and even your happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy. When it affects your happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy, it will disturb and destroy the performance of your duty, as well as your will and desire to follow God. When these positive things are destroyed, the few truths you have come to understand will vanish into thin air and be of no help to you at all. That is why, when you fall into this vicious cycle, it will be hard for you to put the few truth principles that you understand into practice” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). After reading God’s words, I realized that my recent feelings of agitation and frustration were due to my incorrect viewpoint regarding matters. I had been measuring and dealing with everything that befell me by considering whether my luck was good or bad. Whenever various interruptions would constantly occur during the implementation of work, and whenever arranging gatherings with people didn’t go smoothly and hit an obstacle, I had felt incredibly unlucky, and that my luck was bad. Especially when I had seen that the work in other churches was progressing normally, while on my end, nothing went right in arranging for people to attend gatherings—either the brothers and sisters had safety concerns, or were too busy to find the time, and I had missed the gathering even when I’d finally managed to arrange it—all these happenings had made me think even more that I was unlucky, and that my luck was bad, and so I had felt frustrated and distressed. I had even complained that God was not protecting me, such that I had lost the motivation to do my duty. Now I understood that God had allowed various unfavorable situations to come about in order for me to seek the truth and

learn lessons, which was beneficial for my life. I couldn't live in negative emotions. Realizing this, my heart became calm. I wanted to seek the truth to resolve my problems and correctly approach the environments arranged by God.

During my devotionals, I read these words of God: **“The fact is that whether a person feels good or bad about something is based on their own selfish motives, desires, and self-interest, rather than on the essence of the thing itself. So, the basis on which people gauge whether something is good or bad is inaccurate. Because the basis is inaccurate, the final conclusions that they draw are also inaccurate. Returning to the subject of good luck and bad luck, now everyone knows that this saying of luck does not hold water, and that it is neither good nor bad. The people, events, and things that you encounter, whether good or bad, are all determined by God’s sovereignty and arrangements, so you should face them properly. Accept what is good from God, and accept what is bad from God as well. Do not say that you’re lucky when good things happen, and that you’re unlucky when bad things happen. It can only be said that there are lessons for people to learn within all these things, and they should not reject or avoid them. Thank God for the good things, but also thank God for the bad things, because all of them are arranged by Him. Good people, events, things, and environments provide lessons that they should learn, but there is even more to be learned from bad people, events, things, and environments. These are all experiences and episodes that should be part of one’s life. People should not use the idea of luck to measure them. So, what are the thoughts and perspectives of people who use luck to measure whether things are good or bad? What is the essence of such people? Why do they pay so much attention to good luck and bad luck? Do people who**

focus a lot on luck hope that their luck is good, or do they hope that it is bad? (They hope that it is good.) That is right. In fact, they pursue good luck and for good things to happen to them, and they just take advantage of them and profit from them. They do not care how much others suffer, or how many hardships or difficulties others have to endure. They do not want anything that they perceive as unlucky to happen to them. In other words, they do not want any bad things to happen to them: no setbacks, no failures or embarrassments, no being pruned, no losing things, no losing out, and no being deceived. If any of that happens, they regard it as bad luck. No matter who arranges it, if bad things happen, it is unlucky. They hope that all good things—from being promoted, standing out from the crowd, and benefiting at others' expense, to profiting from something, making lots of money, or becoming a high-ranking official—happen to them, and they think that is good luck. They always measure the people, events, and things that they encounter based on luck. They are pursuing good luck, not bad luck. As soon as the slightest thing goes wrong, they get angry, annoyed, and dissatisfied. To put it bluntly, these types of people are selfish. They pursue benefiting themselves at other people's expense, making a profit for themselves, coming out on top, and standing out from the crowd. They would be satisfied if every good thing happened to them alone. This is their nature essence; it is their true face” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). After reading God's words, I understood that things cannot be described as good or bad based on whether they go smoothly or not. It has nothing to do with luck. The environments we encounter each day are under God's sovereignty and arrangement. They are all beneficial for our lives. Thinking about nonbelievers who do not believe in God, whatever happens to them, they

won't accept it from God, only considering their own interests and losses. When faced with adversity, they complain about heaven and blame others, thinking they are unlucky and that their luck is bad. Wasn't I the same? In the past, whenever I had seen someone for whom everything seemed to go smoothly at work—constantly getting promoted, gaining the favor of the boss, or being highly regarded by others—I couldn't help but feel that their luck was exceptionally good, and that they always seemed to encounter favorable situations, whereas I wasn't as fortunate as them, despite working just as hard, and constantly faced various difficulties, and couldn't stand out or get noticed, and often faced reprimands from the boss. So I would believe that everything unlucky was happening to me, and complain about heaven and blame others. Even after I had come to believe in God, I was still the same. Whenever I had seen brothers and sisters who had good caliber and were effective in their duties, and who were valued by the leaders and highly regarded by others, I had felt envy in my heart, feeling that they were so lucky while I was just so unlucky, frequently encountering obstacles and adversity in my duties. I had believed it was down to my bad luck. I now saw that my perspective was absurd. What I had considered as adversity and bad luck, I had determined as such based on my own interests. I reflected that if my implementation of the work had been smooth from the beginning, and the effects had improved, and I'd been able to get myself noticed, I would definitely have been happy. I had professed with my lips that I was considerate of God's intentions, and that I would try hard at my duty to improve the effectiveness of my work. However, in reality, I had only been concerned with my own reputation and status, and how the leader viewed me. I didn't truly have a place for God in my heart. I really had been too selfish! Whenever my personal interests were at stake, I had

complained about heaven and blamed others, and hadn't accepted it from God at all. Wasn't this the same viewpoint as nonbelievers?

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Everyone has to go through many setbacks and failures in life. Who has a life filled with nothing but satisfaction? Who never experiences any failures or setbacks? When sometimes things don't go right for you, or you come across setbacks and failures, this isn't bad luck, it's what you ought to experience. It's like eating food—you have to eat the sour, the sweet, the bitter, and the spicy alike. People cannot do without salt and must eat some salty foods, but if you eat too much salt, it'll harm your kidneys. You have to eat some sour foods in some seasons, but it won't do to eat too much, as it's not good for your teeth or your stomach. Everything has to be eaten in moderation. You eat sour foods, salty foods and sweet foods, and you have to eat some bitter foods, too. Bitter foods are good for some internal organs, so you have to eat a little. A person's life is the same. Most of the people, events, and things you come across in every stage of your life won't be to your liking. Why is this? It's because people pursue different things. If you pursue fame and fortune, status, and wealth, to be superior to others and achieve great success, and so on, then 99 percent of things won't be to your liking. It's just as people say: It's all bad luck and misfortune. However, if you give up on the idea of how lucky or unlucky you are, and treat these things calmly and correctly, you will find that most things are not so unfavorable or difficult to deal with. When you let go of your ambitions and desires, when you stop rejecting or avoiding whatever misfortune befalls you, and you stop measuring such things by how lucky or unlucky you are, many of the things that you used to see as unfortunate and bad, you will now think of as good—the bad things**

will turn into good things. Your mentality and the way that you view things will change, which will enable you to feel differently about your life experiences, and at the same time reap different rewards. This is an extraordinary experience, one which will bring you unimagined rewards. It is a good thing, not a bad thing” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). After reading the words of God, I understood that every person must go through many things in life, experiencing numerous setbacks and failures, as well as moments of joy and sorrow. This way, our life experiences are enriched. Oftentimes we experience things that don't go our way and although this causes us anguish and upset, it is only in this way that we can become stronger and our humanity gradually becomes more mature and steadier. It's like when we experience some failures and are revealed in our duties, by later reflecting on ourselves and seeking the truth, we come to understand our own corruption and shortcomings. This benefits our life entry. Without these experiences, we are like flowers in a greenhouse, unable to withstand even the slightest storm, being very fragile. I reflected on some brothers and sisters I'd interacted with in the past, some had good caliber and were effective in their duties, and were highly regarded by others. On the surface, it had appeared that everything was smooth sailing for them, and that they didn't experience any setbacks or failures. However, they didn't pursue the truth. They had boasted about themselves and flaunted their seniority whenever their work was somewhat effective. They had acted on their own volition in doing their duties, which had led to serious disruptions and disturbances in the church's work. In the end, they had been expelled for walking the path of antichrists and not repenting. From this I realized that doing duties smoothly and receiving high regard from others aren't necessarily good things or signs of good luck. What matters most is whether

a person is walking the path of pursuing the truth and whether they focus on seeking the truth to resolve their corrupt disposition in the face of various things. I also understood that every environment that conflicts with human notions is beneficial to people's lives, as long as they seek the truth and learn lessons from it. Taking me as an example, if I hadn't encountered obstacles and setbacks in my duties recently, I wouldn't have realized that in doing my duty, I had been merely doing it for show in front of others, working for reputation and status, and that I was on the wrong path. Even if I completed my duty this way in the end, I would not be practicing the truth or doing my duty as a created being. Eventually, I would be loathed and eliminated by God due to the lack of change in my corrupt disposition. I realized that behind these unfavorable situations, there was God's good intention, which was to enable me to know myself, and this was God's love.

Afterward, I read another passage of God's words and gained some further understanding of myself. Almighty God says: **"People live and pursue from within their notions and imaginings. Thus, they inevitably view everything, and judge and delimit everything, based on these notions and imaginings. So, no matter how God provides the truth and tells people what views they should hold and what path they should take, as long as people do not let go of their notions and imaginings, they will continue to live by them, and these notions and imaginings will naturally become people's life and the laws by which they survive, and they will inevitably become the ways and methods by which people deal with all kinds of events and things. Once people's notions and imaginings become the principles and criteria by which they view people and things and comport themselves and act, then no matter how they believe in God, or how they pursue, and no matter how much hardship they suffer and how much of a price they pay, it will all be**

futile. As long as someone lives by their notions and imaginings, then this person is resisting God and is hostile to Him; they do not have true submission to the environments arranged by God or to His requirements, and ultimately their outcome will be a very tragic one”

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth II. How to Pursue the Truth (2)). After reading God’s words, I understood that human notions and imaginings are obstacles and stumbling blocks that hinder people from practicing and gaining the truth. When we encounter things, it is not easy to submit if we judge them based on our own notions and imaginings. During this period, I lived in my notions and imaginings. I thought that when implementing the work, I also wanted to improve the effectiveness and considered the work. So I believed that God should have protected me and ensured everything would go smoothly. Now I saw that my thoughts were very unreasonable. Behind the environments arranged by God, there are God’s meticulous arrangements and good intentions. They are also tailored to human needs. Even though some environments may seem contrary to human notions, they all contain God’s goodwill. We should not judge things merely by their surface. I should stand in the position of a created being and submit to God’s orchestration and arrangements. I reflected that this time, my failure to arrange the gathering and implement the work actually contained God’s protection. This is because I later learned that the house I planned to use as a gathering venue was put under police surveillance. Fortunately, we didn’t go there. Otherwise, we might have been arrested or monitored, which could have involved more people and caused more serious consequences. Pondering on this carefully later, I saw that this situation not only allowed me to see God’s sovereignty and arrangement, but also helped me have some understanding of myself. I saw that my motivation in doing my duties was for my own benefit, not to practice the truth to satisfy God. When God

arranged environments that did not fit my notions, I demanded and complained about God without reason, revealing my rebellion and resistance against God. If it weren't for such circumstances, I wouldn't have had any understanding of myself, let alone repent and change. I realized that all this is God's salvation for me. Considering that many churches in different places were now facing police roundups, in such an environment, I could only follow up on the work from behind the scenes. Although the work I could do was limited, I had to do my best with all my strength, seek ways to achieve better work results, and fulfill my responsibilities in this context. Just as God says: **"Some say, 'In certain places with harsh environments, we cannot interact with people face-to-face. How can we carry out checks on them?' No matter how harsh the environment is, there are still methods and approaches to handle these matters. It depends on whether you are responsible and genuinely committed. Isn't that so? (Yes.) If you offer your loyalty and responsibility, then even if the outcome is not ideal, God scrutinizes and knows it, and the responsibility won't be on you. But if you don't offer your loyalty and responsibility, then even if nothing goes wrong and it doesn't lead to any consequences in the end, God will scrutinize it. The nature of these two approaches is different, and God will treat them differently"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). Considering that currently, the brothers and sisters mainly couldn't provide clear answers regarding certain religious notions, I focused on a few key notions and searched for relevant words of God, then wrote to them, communicating with them in detail based on my own understanding. When the brothers and sisters encountered problems and difficulties in preaching the gospel, I promptly corresponded to fellowship with them. Through some time of cooperation, the effectiveness of our gospel preaching had somewhat improved compared to

before. Although there are still many problems in the work, I have faith to cooperate. Thank God for His guidance!

78. When Performing Duties Conflicts With Filial Piety

By Mu Cheng, China

In the past few years, I performed my duties away from home. I would miss my mom sometimes, but my duty kept me busy and she was still young and in pretty good health, so I didn't feel too constrained or worried while doing my duty. Then, in September of 2020, the Communist Party used the census as an excuse to go from house to house looking for believers. During that census, I was arrested and detained by the police. When I was let out on bail and went home, I noticed my mom had grown a lot more grey hairs after all those years apart, had lost a lot of mobility, and her stomach illness had intensified. If she ate the wrong thing, she would be in pain for days on end. Due to safety concerns, she hadn't been able to attend gatherings and she was in a bad state. And due to my being arrested twice by the police, she had gotten so worried that she became depressed and wouldn't go out of the house. I felt just awful. My father had passed away early on, and my mom had suffered a lot to put my sister and me through school. I had always wanted to show some filiality to my mom but never had the chance to do so. Now that I was home, I could finally take care of my mom.

As soon as I came home, the National Security Brigade came to our house and told me I had to check in with them every month and report my work status and whereabouts. Due to this, I was unable to contact the church and do my duty, so I took a photography job and spent the rest of my time looking after my mom. When I had time, I would chat with my mom about my experiences those past few years, and my sister and I would also take her out to eat at restaurants. Sometimes, I'd take her to the hospital for

checkups and I'd buy her supplements for her stomach issue. The police were always coming to our house and bothering us, making me report to them and sign the "Three Statements." Seeing how they were controlling me and worrying that something would happen to me, my mom actually became even more depressed and stopped interacting with non-family members. She wouldn't even go out to buy groceries. I was quite worried to see my mom acting like that, and was concerned she might develop a mental illness. I did everything I could to give her guidance—I fellowshiped with her, I took her out to help her relax, but nothing worked. I was worried and anxious. All I could do was work a little harder to give myself a better life, so she wouldn't worry so much about me. Just like that, a year went by, and the police still hadn't let up their tight grip on me. I still couldn't do my duty near my home. Later on, my brothers and sisters asked if I could leave home to perform a duty. Because my mom wasn't doing well and I wanted to take care of her, I turned down the assignment. After that, they fellowshiped with me several times, supported and helped me, fellowshiped God's intention and hoped that I would continue doing my duty. I could sense that this was God's love and salvation descending upon me but I still felt conflicted. I thought of how if I went off to do my duty again, the police would surely notice I'd stopped reporting to them, and who knows when I'd be able to come back home. My mom was in poor health and she was in a terrible state. If I stayed by her side, I could at least take care of her and practice some filial piety. Would she become even more depressed if I left? What if she got even worse and developed a mental illness? What would my friends and relatives think of me then? Wouldn't they think of me as unfilial? Due to these concerns, I felt really conflicted and didn't know what to do.

During that time, I came across a passage of God's words regarding filial piety. God says: **"God told people to honor their parents first, and afterward, God put forward higher requirements for people with regard to them practicing the truth, performing their duties, and following the way of God—which of these should you adhere to? (The higher requirements.) Is it right to practice according to the higher requirements? Can the truth be divided into higher and lower truths, or older and newer truths? (No.) So when you practice the truth, what should you practice according to? What does it mean to practice the truth? (Handling matters according to the principles.) Handling matters according to the principles is the most important thing. Practicing the truth means practicing God's words in different times, places, environments, and contexts; it is not about obstinately applying rules to things, it is about upholding the truth principles. That is what it means to practice the truth. So, there is simply no conflict between practicing God's words and abiding by the requirements put forward by God. To put it more concretely, there is no conflict at all between honoring your parents and completing the commission and duty that God has given you. Which of these are God's current words and requirements? You should consider this question first. God demands different things of different people; He has distinct requirements for them. Those who serve as leaders and workers have been called by God, so they must renounce, and they cannot stay with their parents, honoring them. They should accept God's commission and renounce everything to follow Him. That is one kind of situation. Regular followers have not been called upon by God, so they can stay with their parents and honor them. There are no rewards for doing this, and they will not gain any blessings as a result of it, but if they do not show filial piety, then they**

lack humanity. In fact, honoring one's parents is just a kind of responsibility, and it falls short of the practice of the truth. It is submitting to God that is the practice of the truth, it is accepting God's commission that is a manifestation of submission to God, and it is those who renounce everything to do their duties who are followers of God. In sum, the most important task that lies before you is to perform your duty well. That is the practice of the truth, and it is a manifestation of submission to God. So, what is the truth that people should primarily practice now? (Performing one's duty.) That is right, loyally performing one's duty is practicing the truth. If a person does not perform their duty sincerely, then they are just laboring" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (4)). Through God's words, I came to know His intention and demands. Honor for one's mother and father is a demand that God previously put forth and should be practiced. As long as it doesn't influence one's duty, caring for and spending time with one's parents, and keeping them from worry and anxiety is every person's responsibility as a son or daughter. Yet, this has nothing to do with practicing the truth and submitting to God. When my mom fell ill, it was my responsibility to take her to the hospital and buy her supplements, but I was just doing my filial duty, not practicing the truth. When God calls to and demands of people to perform their duty, even if the doing of that duty conflicts with one's ability to be filial to one's parents, as created beings we must submit to God and follow God's way to fulfill our duties as created beings. This is our heavenly calling and God's present intention and demand. Having realized this, I knew how I should decide going forward. This is a crucial time for the great expansion of the kingdom gospel, and there is a lot of urgent work to be done. I had enjoyed so much of God's supply of truth and God's house had cultivated me for years, so of course I had to choose to do my duty to

satisfy God. After all, my mom was not in great health but she could look after herself alright, and my uncle and sister could also help take care of her. I had to fulfill my duty—this was God’s hope and demand of me and a necessity for my pursuing of the truth and gaining of salvation. If I stayed at home, I would continue to be monitored and controlled by the police and would be completely incapable of performing my duty and walking the path of faith. If I did stay by my mom’s side in filiality, I would eventually become tied up in concerns of family and flesh and be unable to do my duty. I would lose my function as a created being and lose my chance at being saved. I thought of the resolution I once made before God that I would give my entire life to God and expend myself for Him. I also thought of all that I had learned while doing my duty away from home, and how much my life had grown. This was much more meaningful and valuable than living in my flesh and family at home. God was guiding me on that path, a path He had set out for me. I was willing to continue walking it.

After that, I told my mother of my plan to leave home to perform my duty. My mother was a little reluctant to part, but she respected my decision. In the following days, when I wasn’t working, I’d lead my mom in eating and drinking God’s words and sharing fellowship. I hoped that she could emerge from her depression as soon as possible. A few days later, I got everything in place at home and set off. Soon after that, I dove right into my duty. Despite being quite busy, I still couldn’t help but miss my mom. When I thought of how sad and reluctant she looked when she saw me out of the house, I would get a pang of sorrow. At home, I could spend time with and chat with her so she wouldn’t be so lonely. Now that I was gone, how would she fare on her own? My mom was in poor health and I worried her worsening health would deepen her depression. If time went on and she couldn’t shake her depression, would she do something foolish? The more I

thought, the more worried I became. If something were to happen to my mom, my relatives would certainly speak ill of me. With all this on my mind, I became a bit distracted and couldn't focus on my duty. I knew that I should put everything into my duty while I was there, that fulfilling my duty to satisfy God was key, but I couldn't shake that feeling of guilt and self-reproach toward my mom. Later, I thought of how God's words say: **"Who can truly and completely expend themselves for Me and offer up their all for My sake? You are all half-hearted; your thoughts go around and around, thinking of home, of the outside world, of food and clothing. Despite the fact that you are here before Me, doing things for Me, deep down you are still thinking of your wife, children, and parents at home. Are all these things your property? Why do you not entrust them into My hands? Do you not have sufficient faith in Me? Or is it that you are afraid I will make inappropriate arrangements for you? Why do you always worry about the family of your flesh and pine for your loved ones?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 59). Indeed, weren't my mother's health and the severity of her depression and despondency all in God's hands? No amount of worry on my part would resolve her issues; I had to put everything in God's hands. Later, I prayed to God, "O God, I know that whether or not my mother's state will improve and if her health will deteriorate is all in Your hands. Please guide her out of despondency and misery. If there is something she ought to learn from this, please guide her to reflect on herself and learn to experience Your work. I am willing to put everything in Your hands and submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements." After prayer, I felt a bit more at ease. Later on, I wrote a letter to my mother, sharing everything I'd learned, and pointed out a few problems in her experience with the hope that she would reflect on and know herself. Soon after, I received a letter

from my mother. She said that not long after I left, the brothers and sisters arranged church life for her. What's more, through God's words she came to understand the negative emotions associated with her living in a state of depression and despondency. Her state also was much improved. I was so happy when I heard this news and gave thanks to God.

Later, when I read God's fellowship on the truth of how to properly view the responsibilities one fulfills toward their parents, I felt instantly relieved and gained a proper view and principle of practice. Almighty God says: **"The parental relationship is the most difficult relationship for someone to handle emotionally, but in fact, it's not entirely unmanageable. Only on the basis of understanding the truth can people treat this matter correctly and rationally. Do not start from the perspective of feelings, and do not start from the insights or the perspectives of worldly people. Instead, treat your parents in the proper manner according to God's words. What role do parents actually play, what do children actually mean to their parents, what attitude should children have toward their parents, and how should people handle and resolve the relationship between parents and children? People should not view these things based on feelings, nor should they be influenced by any wrong ideas or prevailing sentiments; they should be approached correctly based on God's words. If you fail to fulfill any of your responsibilities to your parents in the environment ordained by God, or if you do not play any role in their lives whatsoever, is that being unfilial? Will your conscience accuse you? Your neighbors, classmates, and relatives will all berate you and criticize you behind your back. They will call you an unfilial child, saying: 'Your parents sacrificed so much for you, invested so much painstaking effort in you, and did so much for you ever since you were**

little, and you, being the ungrateful child you are, just disappear without a trace, not even sending word back that you're safe. Not only do you not come back for New Year, you don't even give a phone call or send a greeting to your parents.' Every time you hear such words, your conscience bleeds and weeps, and you feel condemned. 'Oh, they're right.' Your face flushes with heat, and your heart trembles as if being pricked by needles. Have you had these types of feelings? (Yes, before.) Are the neighbors and your relatives right in saying that you are unfilial? ... First of all, most people choose to leave home to perform their duties in part because of the overarching objective circumstances, which necessitate them leaving their parents; they cannot stay by their parents' side to take care of them and accompany them. It's not that they willingly choose to leave their parents; this is the objective reason. For another thing, subjectively speaking, you go out to perform your duties not because you wanted to leave your parents and escape your responsibilities, but because of God's calling. In order to cooperate with God's work, accept His calling, and perform the duties of a created being, you had no choice but to leave your parents; you could not stay by their side to accompany them and take care of them. You didn't leave them to avoid responsibilities, right? Leaving them to avoid your responsibilities and having to leave them to answer God's calling and perform your duties—aren't these of two different natures? (Yes.) In your heart, you do have emotional attachments and thoughts for your parents; your feelings are not empty. If objective circumstances allow, and you are able to stay by their side while also performing your duties, then you would be willing to stay by their side, regularly taking care of them and fulfilling your responsibilities. But because of objective circumstances, you must leave them; you cannot

remain at their side. It's not that you don't want to fulfill your responsibilities as their child, but that you can't. Isn't this different in nature? (Yes.) If you left home to avoid being filial and fulfilling your responsibilities, that is unfilial and lacks humanity. Your parents raised you, but you can't wait to spread your wings and quickly go off on your own. You don't want to see your parents, and you don't pay any regard when you hear about some difficulty they've encountered. Even if you have the means to help, you don't; you just pretend not to hear and let others say whatever they want about you—you simply don't want to fulfill your responsibilities. This is being unfilial. But is this the case now? (No.) Many people have left their counties, cities, provinces, or even their countries to perform their duties; they are already far away from their hometowns. Furthermore, it's not convenient for them to stay in touch with their families for various reasons. Occasionally, they inquire about their parents' current situation from people who came from the same hometown and feel relieved when they hear that their parents are still healthy and getting by okay. In fact, you are not unfilial; you haven't reached the point of lacking humanity, where you don't even want to care about your parents or fulfill your responsibilities toward them. It's because of various objective reasons that you have to make this choice, so you're not unfilial. These are the two reasons. And there's one more, too: If your parents are not the type of people who particularly persecute you or obstruct your belief in God, if they support your belief in God, or if they are brothers and sisters who believe in God like you, members of God's house themselves, then which of you doesn't silently pray to God when thinking about your parents deep down? Which of you doesn't entrust your parents—along with their health, safety, and all their life's needs

—to God's hands? Entrusting your parents to God's hands is the best way to show filial respect to them. You don't hope they face all kinds of difficulties in their lives, and you don't hope they live a bad life, eat poorly, or suffer poor health. Deep down in your heart, you certainly hope that God will protect them and keep them safe. If they are believers in God, you hope that they can perform their own duties and you also hope they can stand firm in their testimony. This is fulfilling one's human responsibilities; people can only achieve this much with their own humanity. Moreover, what's most important is that after years of believing in God and listening to so many truths, at the very least people have this little bit of understanding and comprehension: Man's fate is determined by Heaven, man lives in the hands of God, and having God's care and protection is far more important than the concerns, filial piety, or companionship of one's children. Don't you feel relieved that your parents are under God's care and protection? You don't need to worry about them. If you do worry, that means you do not trust God; your faith in Him is too small. If you are genuinely worried and concerned about your parents, then you should pray to God often, entrust them to God's hands, and let God orchestrate and arrange everything. God rules over the fate of humankind and He rules over their every day and everything that happens to them, so what are you still worried about? You can't even control your own life, you yourself have a ton of difficulties; what could you do to let your parents live happily every day? All you can do is entrust everything to God's hands. If they are believers, ask God to lead them onto the right path so they can ultimately be saved. If they are not believers, let them walk whatever path they want. For parents that are kinder and have some humanity, you can pray to God to bless them so they can spend their

remaining years in happiness. As for how God works, He has His arrangements, and people should submit to them. So, overall, people have an awareness in their conscience of the responsibilities they fulfill toward their parents. Regardless of the attitude toward one's parents this awareness brings, whether it's concern or choosing to be present by their side, in any case, people should not feel guilty or have a burdened conscience because they could not fulfill their responsibilities toward their parents due to being affected by objective circumstances. These issues, and others like them, should not become troubles in people's life of belief in God; they should be let go. When it comes to these topics related to fulfilling responsibilities toward one's parents, people should have these accurate understandings and should no longer feel constrained. For one thing, from the bottom of your heart you know that you are not unfilial, and you are not shirking or avoiding your responsibilities. For another thing, your parents are in God's hands, so what is there still to worry about? Any worries one might have are superfluous. Each person will smoothly live according to God's sovereignty and arrangements until the end, reaching the end of their path, without any deviation. So, people don't need to worry themselves about this matter anymore. Whether you are filial, whether you have fulfilled your responsibilities toward your parents, or whether you should repay your parents' kindness—these are not things you should think about; they are things you should let go of" (The Word, Vol. 6.

On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (16)). Through God's words I saw how when I left home to do my duty and was unable to fulfill my responsibility as a son, I felt guilty and worried that I'd be thought of as an unfilial son. I saw that I wasn't thinking from the perspective of truth and through God's words regarding how to properly view a son or daughter's

responsibility to their parents, but rather viewed such a responsibility according to the familial affection of a worldly person. In reality, having the ability and chance to take care of one's parents but failing to be filial, and not staying by one's parents' side because they have received a calling from God to do their duty are two situations of completely different natures. If a son or daughter lives with their parents and has time to be filial to their parents, but is unwilling to fulfill their responsibility to their parents due to their own interests or desires, and doesn't care for them when they get old and fall ill, then they lack humanity and have lost the conscience and reason that a normal human ought to have. Many of us who believe in and follow God are willing to fulfill our responsibilities to our parents, and can take care of them to the best of our abilities when we are by their sides. However, due to the persecution of the Communist Party, many of us are unable to be at home and do our duty where we live. We are simply unable to live with our parents and practice filial piety. Also, sometimes due to the needs of the church's work, we must leave our homes to do our duties as created beings and are unable to stay at our parents' sides in filiality. If circumstances permit, we also hope that we can call our parents often to see how they're doing and let them know we're fine, so that they don't worry. We hold a certain amount of concern for our parents in our hearts. Sometimes we'll also pray for our parents and put our family in God's hands. We do our best to practice filial piety and fulfill our responsibilities in our own ways and according to our respective situations. This is not the same as what worldly people call "unfilial." We are walking a different path than them, we believe in and follow God and walk the right path of life, and we seek to perform our duties and follow God's will. We shoulder a much more important responsibility and mission. Doing our duty is a matter of practicing according to God's intention and demands, of practicing the truth

and submitting to God. This goes far, far beyond man's standard of morality and conscience. When I realized all this, I felt much clearer and had the right view and attitude. I no longer feared being mocked by worldly people or being accused of being unfilial. Through God's fellowship, I also clearly saw that I lacked true faith in God. I failed to see that man's mortality and fate are in God's hands. As for our parents' health, what illness they may face and how they live in their old age, none of this could be determined by mere people, it was all predetermined by God. I had to recognize God's sovereignty in this matter and submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. I thought back to the period of time when I was still at home, my mom had fallen ill, and I had taken her all over to see doctors, and would schedule her for appointments whenever any specialists were available, but despite taking all that medicine, her situation not only failed to improve, it actually got worse. There was nothing I could do for my mom while at her side, I hadn't been able to reduce her suffering in the slightest. When she became mired in depression and suffering, I fellowshiped with her quite a bit, sometimes guiding her and other times exposing her issues, but she was stuck in an improper state and didn't want to rectify it. There was really nothing I could do despite my worries. Yet, when I left to perform my duty, my mother was actually able to gather normally and was willing to interact with brothers and sisters, and her state improved. I saw that my small acts of filial piety weren't really helpful. God's protection and care were far more important than my staying at her side to look after her. I saw that parents' well-being and happiness don't depend on whether their children are filial to them, but rather on God's sovereignty and predestination. The best way that we can practice as children is to pray for our parents and put them entirely in God's hands. Just as God's words say: **"Entrusting your parents to God's hands is the best way to show filial**

respect to them” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (16)). When we have faith that God’s arrangements will all be suitable and submit to God’s sovereignty, we live a relaxed and carefree life.

I previously hadn’t grasped any of this, and always felt guilty about not being filial to my mom, always worried that others would call me unfilial and talk behind my back. As a result, while doing my duty, I always had concerns and felt constrained. Despite leaving home to perform my duty, my heart would often be filled with worry for my mom. I wasn’t able to put my heart completely into my duty, and as a result, I failed to grasp principles and skills, and problems and deviations would often crop up in my work. Yet I didn’t feel guilty or remorseful for this, and instead would often feel guilty for not being filial to my mom. Didn’t I have my priorities backward? I was being rebellious toward God! It was due to God’s sovereignty and predestination that I had parents and life. I am first and foremost a created being, and secondly a son of my parents. Yet, I was always trying to satisfy my emotional needs, and avoid being reprimanded by worldly people, but I failed to fulfill the responsibility in my duty. Was this not a treacherous act? How could I claim to have a true conscience? I thought of a passage of God’s words: **“You have preserved your reputation as a filial child, you have satisfied your emotional needs, your conscience has never been accused, and you’ve repaid your parents’ kindness, but there is one thing you have neglected and lost: You did not treat and handle all these matters according to God’s words, and you have lost the opportunity to perform your duty as a created being. What does this mean? It means that you have been filial to your parents but betrayed God. You demonstrated filial piety and satisfied the emotional needs of your parents’ flesh, but you rebelled against God. You would rather choose to be a filial child than perform**

your duties as a created being. This is the greatest disrespect to God. God will not say you are someone who submits to Him or possesses humanity just because you are a filial child, you haven't disappointed your parents, you have a conscience, and you fulfill your responsibilities as a child. If you only satisfy the needs of your conscience and the emotional needs of your flesh, but do not accept God's words or the truth as the basis and principles for treating or handling this matter, then you show the greatest rebelliousness to God"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (16)). The judgment of God's words cut right to the quick. Indeed, even if I stayed with my mom and cared for her as best as I could, even if worldly people thought well of me and I became known as a highly filial son, before God, I still would have lost my function and duty as a created being, I would be lacking the slightest bit of conscience toward God, who had given me life and all things. As such, I would be among the most rebellious and resistant people toward God and would not be worthy of His salvation. Realizing this, I felt miserable. I saw that I had been corrupted too deeply by Satan, acted unconscientiously toward God, lacked the slightest bit of sincerity and totally lacked humanity! I realized my duty and responsibility, and stopped being constrained by this "unfilial" label. I was willing to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, do what I was capable of in my duty, and was willing to put my mother in God's hands, wishing for God to guide us to experience God's work in our lives and fulfill our duties. Thanks be to God for allowing me to make the right choice and have the correct pursuit!

79. I No Longer Live for Money

By Weixiao, China

When I was young, my family was very poor. Our relatives and neighbors all looked down on us, and our neighbors' kids didn't play with me. I remember there was one time when I cheerfully went to see if the neighbors' kid wanted to play, but when I was about to reach the entrance to her home, she suddenly closed the door. This scene is imprinted in my childhood memories like a stamp. It hurt my self-esteem very badly. Once I started school, my classmates and teachers also looked down on me. When I saw that the children of other families had nice backpacks and pencil cases and pretty clothing, knowing I didn't have any of that, I thought every day of how great it would be if my family could have as much money as other families. Then people wouldn't look down on me. When I was 10 years old, my family was in great debt due to a traffic accident, and my father went to borrow money from my relatives. Because we were poor, they didn't dare lend it to us. After that, my father became so gloomy that he would often sigh in despair, and he often said to me, "Our relatives and neighbors look down on us because we don't have money. When you grow up, you've got to bring honor to the family name; only when you earn more money will people think highly of you." My father's words and the memory of being bullied as a child were both etched into my mind, and I resolved to make lots and lots of money when I grew up, lead a life of affluence, get rid of my "poor person" label once and for all, and make all those people who once looked down on me take notice.

In 1996, my father began working as an intermediary in the freight transport business. A few years later, our family business was flourishing more and more. Not only had we paid off our debt, we also bought a freight

truck and got telephones and mobile devices. Once our family got money, the relatives and neighbors who had looked down on us in the past began to pay us visits. Wherever we went, we were thought highly of by others. I could finally walk with my head held high. That made me believe even more firmly that living in this world, one has to earn more money. Only when one has money in their hands will people respect them. Through what I saw and heard around me, I gradually learned how to conduct business. In 1999, just as I was preparing to invest all my energy into business, God's salvation of the last days came upon me. In the beginning, I was very enthusiastic in my belief in God. I saw that many people had still not come before God, and so I joined the ranks of gospel-spreaders. After that, I often went out to preach the gospel, which interfered with my family's business. My family began to scold me, saying, "Why are you believing in God at such a young age? If you keep running around, we won't give you any money to spend." I thought, "If I don't have money, then won't I have to endure people's discrimination just like when I was young?" In the end, I didn't defeat this temptation and gave up on doing my duties, and I would only attend gatherings every now and then. As work became more and more busy, my heart grew further from God. Later, my father handed the management of the entire business over to me, and I had my own career in my early twenties. At that time, I was extremely happy. In order to make more money and become a successful career woman, I racked my brains every day to get in touch with various goods suppliers. All day and night, I was getting more phone calls than I could answer. When I was thirsty, I couldn't manage to drink water, and when my throat was hoarse, I wasn't willing to rest. Through this hard work, I finally saved up close to 100,000 yuan. Although I suffered more than the average person during those few years, it was worth it seeing my purse gradually start to bulge.

Later, I saw that most of the clients who came to my home to discuss business drove cars and lived in high-rises, while I was renting an old two-room house facing the street. I paled in comparison to these rich folks. I said to myself, “This won’t do, I’ve got to keep working hard and strive to one day drive a car, live in a high-rise apartment, and have my own company.” To fulfill my wish as soon as possible, I became even busier than before. In those years, I barely had a single good night’s sleep and was often in a state of utter exhaustion. I was still young when I began to come down with tension headaches. When I had these headaches, it felt like being pricked with a bunch of needles. In addition, I often got nauseous and vomited due to radiation from my computer and phone. To alleviate the pain, I used my fingernails to forcefully pinch my scalp, or smashed my head against the wall, but these methods didn’t mitigate my pain in the slightest. When my head hurt too much for me to bear any longer, I thought of going to the hospital to get tested, but I saw all the 100-yuan banknotes flowing into my purse and couldn’t bring myself to do it. “Forget it,” I thought, “opportunities to make money are rare now. I should take advantage of this opportunity and make some more money while I’m still young.” Several years later, we had a car and a house and had registered a containerization company. Each time I drove my car to other companies to talk business, the bosses gazed at me with approving eyes, and praised me for having my own career at such a young age, saying I had great ability. Many clients often called me “manager” when they saw me, and my friends praised me for being a successful woman. During holidays, when we drove as a family back to our home in the countryside, many of our neighbors came to get a look at us, and said that my husband’s parents were fortunate to have such a capable daughter-in-law. Hearing these words of praise, I was very pleased with myself. Those few years, every day I was thinking

about how I could earn more money, and I grew more and more apathetic toward faith in God. Sometimes, when I did not participate in a gathering, the sisters would come looking for me. But I wasn't at all in the right state of mind to listen to their fellowship. Sometimes, although I would go to a gathering, I would still be thinking about business matters the whole time. Although I was extremely busy every day, the business was not going as smoothly as I had imagined. Traffic accidents were happening one after another, and many clients were behind in their freight payments. In those few years, we lost more than several hundreds of thousands of yuan. To make back the money we had lost, I put in even more time and energy than before. With an extreme workload every day, my body was in serious overdrive, and my headaches grew more and more severe. Every day, I felt that I'd be better off dead. Ever since we started having money, my husband would go out every day to seek pleasure and stay out all night. He even gambled and squandered a lot of money. We argued every day over this, and my face was often red with tears. I felt that living was too painful. I felt extremely helpless, and also very puzzled. Now, I had already realized my dream. I had a car, a house, and a company. But why did I not feel the least bit happy? What on earth was going on?

When I was in pain and helpless, I thought of the book of God's words that I had put in my office before. I turned to the chapter titled **"The Sighing of the Almighty"** and began to read. At that time, it was very quiet in the office, and I kept on reading from the beginning. When I read the final passage, God's words touched my heart. God says: **"Humanity, having strayed from the Almighty's provision of life, is ignorant of the purpose of existence, but fears death nonetheless. They are without help or support, yet still reluctant to close their eyes, and they steel themselves to prop up sacks of flesh, which lack any feeling in their**

souls, as they drag out an ignoble existence in this world. You live in this way, without hope, as do others, without aim. Only the Holy One of legend will save the people who, moaning in the midst of their suffering, long desperately for His arrival. So far, such belief has not been realized in those who lack consciousness. Nevertheless, the people still yearn for it so. The Almighty has mercy on these people who have suffered deeply; at the same time, He feels averse toward these people who lack consciousness, as He has had to wait too long for an answer from humanity. He wishes to seek, to seek your heart and your spirit, to bring you water and food and to awaken you, that you may no longer be thirsty and hungry. When you are weary and when you begin to feel something of the bleak desolation of this world, do not be lost, do not cry. Almighty God, the Watcher, will embrace your arrival at any time. He is keeping watch by your side, waiting for you to turn back around. He is waiting for the day you suddenly recover your memory: when you realize that you came from God, that, at some unknown time you lost your direction, at some unknown time you lost consciousness on the road, and at some unknown time acquired a ‘father’; when you realize, furthermore, that the Almighty has always been keeping watch, waiting there a very, very long time for your return. He has been watching with desperate longing, waiting for a response without an answer. His watching and waiting are beyond any price, and they are for the sake of the human heart and the human spirit. Perhaps this watching and waiting are indefinite, and perhaps they are at an end. But you should know exactly where your heart and your spirit are right now” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Sighing of the Almighty). When I read the words “**waiting for a response without an answer,**” my heart which had been in a deep sleep was suddenly awakened. And I began to ponder, “Who

can wait for a response without an answer? Only God! Only God is always silently staying by people's side like this." God's words consoled my wounded soul, and I couldn't stop my tears from flowing. In that moment, I felt that my heart was very close to God. In all those years of believing in God, I had never seriously read God's words, and my brain was always filled with thoughts of how I could earn more money and get people to think highly of me. Every day, I dragged my exhausted body through managing a business. In the end, I gained generous material enjoyments and the respect of others, but what this brought me was my husband's repeated betrayals, as well as illnesses. I had not felt the slightest shred of happiness. Instead, what I felt was empty, in pain, and helpless. All this pain was caused by keeping myself away and hiding myself from God's care and protection. Ten years ago, I heard the voice of God, but I did not cherish His saving grace or properly eat and drink His words, nor did I take up doing my duties. I was so rebellious, but God did not abandon me, and always stayed by my side, waiting for my change of heart. When I was confused and helpless, God's words promptly consoled my wounded soul. When I did not regularly attend gatherings and was keeping away from God, He had the sisters help me again and again, but I was ungrateful and resisted. I repeatedly rejected God's salvation of me; I truly did not have any conscience or reason. The more I thought, the more I regretted and reproached myself. Crying, I prayed to God, "God, I was wrong. I hate that I didn't read Your words carefully back then and put my whole heart into earning money. I thought that if I had money, I would have everything. But after I gained money and material enjoyments, I actually felt so empty, in pain, and helpless. God, the path I chose before was the wrong one. From now on, I want to pursue the truth and walk the path of believing in God once again." After praying, I felt extremely at ease and peaceful. I was like

a lone boat in the sea that had found a harbor to set my anchor, like a prodigal son who had returned to the arms of his mother after wandering for years. I felt a sense of security that I had never felt before. After that, whenever it was time to gather, I would always schedule my business ahead of time. Gradually, I was able to feel at ease when I participated in gatherings, and I could usually make some time to read God's words and do my duty in the church. But sometimes, when my business conflicted with my duty, I would choose my business and put off my duty in spite of myself. Because of this, I was tormented on the inside. Sometimes, I would also think, "When will I be able to be unaffected by my business and do my duty in peace?" When I saw that many brothers and sisters were able to abandon their families and give up their careers to preach the gospel, my heart was touched so much. I thought that we are all humans, so if brothers and sisters can cast aside their concerns and expend themselves for God, then why can't I let go? I hoped so much that one day I would be able to wholeheartedly invest myself in doing my duty; how great that would be! I repeated this thought again and again to God in prayer, hoping that God would give me more faith and let the day come when I was able to let go of my business and wholeheartedly expend myself for Him.

In the summer of 2011, my headaches were getting increasingly severe. I really couldn't bear it anymore, so I went to the city hospital to get checked. The doctor said to me, "Your headaches may be related to the work you are doing now. If you want to improve your condition, the best way is to not do this business anymore. Otherwise, your condition will get more and more severe." Hearing the doctor's words, it was clear to me that this was God giving me a way out. I wanted to use this opportunity to tell my family that I could not continue doing business anymore, but I was unable to make up my mind, because it took me 10 years of painstaking

effort and management to bear the fruits of today, and moreover, business was flourishing that year and we could sometimes earn five or six thousand yuan in one day. If I gave up, then the clients I had been in contact with all these years would be stolen by others in the industry. In the end, I was unable to overcome money's seduction, and I endured the torture of my illness to persist with working for several more months. Although I earned a lot of money, I was not happy at all, and I thought of before, when I had prayed to God and been willing to let go of my business and expend myself for Him. But now, I was still holding onto money and not letting go. I felt very guilty inside. So, I prayed to God again, asking Him to help me let go of my business and expend myself for Him. One day, I saw God's words that said: **"If I were to place some money in front of you right now and give you the freedom to choose—and if I did not condemn you for your choice—then most of you would choose the money and forsake the truth. The better among you would give up the money and choose the truth reluctantly, while those in-between would seize the money in one hand and the truth in the other. Would your true colors thus not become self-evident? When choosing between the truth and anything to which you are loyal, you would all make this choice, and your attitude would remain the same. Is that not so? Are there not many among you who have seesawed between right and wrong? In contests between positive and negative, black and white, you are surely aware of the choices that you have made between family and God, children and God, peace and disruption, riches and poverty, status and ordinariness, being supported and being cast aside, and so on. Between a peaceful family and a broken one, you chose the former, and you did so without any hesitation; between riches and duty, you again chose the former, even lacking the will to return to shore; between luxury and poverty,**

you chose the former; when choosing between your sons, daughters, wives and husbands, and Me, you chose the former; and between notion and truth, you once again chose the former. Faced with all manner of your evil deeds, I have simply lost faith in you. It simply astounds Me that your hearts are so resistant to being softened. Many years of dedication and effort have apparently brought Me nothing more than your abandonment and despair, but My hopes for you grow with each passing day, for My day has been completely laid bare before everyone. Yet you persist in seeking dark and evil things, and refuse to loosen your grip on them. What, then, will be your outcome? Have you ever given careful consideration to this? If you were asked to choose again, what then would be your position? Would it still be the former? Would you still bring Me disappointment and wretched sorrow? Would your hearts still possess the sole modicum of warmth? Would you still be unaware of what to do to comfort My heart? At this moment, what do you choose? Will you submit to My words or be averse to them?"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Whom Are You Loyal?). Faced with God's questioning, I entered a state of reflection. I thought about how I prayed to God many times saying that I was willing to abandon my business and would expend myself for Him at all times. But, when I looked at my daily income of several thousand yuan, I was no longer willing to abandon it. Was I not cheating God? I thought that although I was believing in God during these years, I had spent almost all my time and energy on doing business. My brain was full of thoughts about how I could earn more money, and I never cherished the duty that I should do. Whenever there was a conflict between my duty and my business, I always chose to satisfy the business side first, putting my duty in the back of my mind and not taking it seriously. These few years, I became a total slave to money in order to stand

out amongst my peers, and every day I was struggling amidst the emptiness and pain, sinking further and further. Even though I rebelled against God over and over, He never gave up on saving me. When I could not participate in gatherings for the sake of my business, He arranged for sisters to support and help me. When I was facing the betrayal of my husband, the challenges of my business, and also my ailments, and when I was living in a state of pain and helplessness, God used His words to lead and guide me, and enabled me to yearn for the light and have the will to properly pursue the truth. When I would not let go of my business, God used the doctor's words to advise me. He has always been anxious and worried about my life, and has made such painstaking efforts for me, but I was constantly thinking about how to earn more money and did not consider my duty at all. I was truly so selfish! Now, God was still giving me a chance to do my duty, and I had to cherish it. I had to expend myself for the spreading of the kingdom gospel and do my duty as a created being. After I made my choice, some unexpected events took place, which made me see through the harm and consequences of pursuing wealth to some extent.

One day in the winter of 2011, someone made a threatening call to my husband, saying that we had offended someone, and asked my husband to send them 100,000 yuan to ensure his safety. Otherwise, they were going to remove my husband's arms and legs. Hearing these words, my heart began to thump with fear. I had only seen such scenes on TV before, and never thought that I would experience them first-hand in real life. Why was the world in such chaos nowadays? How could people's hearts be so sinister? In that moment, I suddenly thought that if I continued to do this business, it would truly lead to a fatal disaster. I thought that ever since my family had money, I had not spent a single day in peace, and now I had encountered this unexpected misfortune—money did not bring happiness and joy. Later,

I heard in succession about several truck drivers who delivered goods to our home who had died in car accidents. When I heard the news of their deaths, I simply could not believe that it was true. Among them, the young ones were only twenty-something years old, and the middle-aged ones were only in their forties. The ones who left the deepest impression on me were a husband-and-wife couple who would not hire a driver in order to earn more money and would work all day and night. In the end, they got in a car accident due to fatigue, and both husband and wife died. Even though they earned some money, they lost their lives doing it. What good did that money do them? I thought of the Lord Jesus' words: **"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Matthew 16:26). Thinking back to those years when I put my whole heart into climbing the social ladder, every day I was like a machine working day and night. Although I earned some money and also gained praise and was thought highly of by people, I did not get any joy or enjoyment from it, and instead I felt increasingly empty and in pain. For the sake of earning money, I came down with illnesses, and when my head hurt so bad that I wanted to bang it against a wall, I was still unwilling to stop making money. I saw that money had me firmly bound up. Money is like a knife that kills people in cold blood. If I was still trying to earn money for all I was worth like before, maybe one day I would also be tortured to death by money like these people. After this day, I would absolutely not give my life for money anymore. It occurred to me that now there were still many people who could not see through this matter and were still splashing about inside money's whirlpool. They didn't see a direction for their life and didn't know how to live a meaningful life. I wanted to preach God's gospel in the last days to more people, to help people hear His voice sooner, understand

the truth, and no longer suffer from Satan's corruption and harm. I told my family that now my headaches were very bad, and that in the future I would no longer participate in business matters. My family agreed and allowed me to recuperate. I was very happy. From my heart, I thanked God for offering me a way out.

In 2012, after the Spring Festival, I handed over the entire business to my husband for him to manage, and I could read God's words and do my duty in peace. I felt extremely at ease and peaceful inside my soul. My mental state also gradually improved. What was even more miraculous was that without any treatment, my headaches magically went away. My heart was very touched, and I was keenly aware that this was God healing my illness and relieving me from the torture of my ailment and the destruction of my spirit. I resolved to properly do my duty and repay God for His saving grace. When my husband saw that my headaches were getting better, he pressed me to continue doing business, and I stated clearly to him my attitude of not wanting to do business again. When he saw I wouldn't listen to him, he used divorce to threaten me and said that if I continued believing in God, he wouldn't give me money to spend. Seeing how heartless my husband was, I was so angry that my whole body started shaking. Scenes of people looking down on me as a child appeared in my mind once more. I truly did not want to live that kind of life again. I felt very weak. If I did not believe in God, I could go on enjoying an abundant material life and the respect of others. If I chose to do my duty at all times, I would lose everything I had. My heart was in great pain and extreme torment, and tears flowed nonstop down my face. On one side was my duty, and on the other was the career I had managed for many years. I didn't know how to make a choice. Crying, I prayed to God, "God! I am very weak right now, and I don't know what I should choose. If I persist in doing my duty, my career

and my family will be lost. If I choose my family and my career and abandon my belief in God and the performance of my duty, I will be a person without a conscience and reason. God, I don't want to leave You. If You did not guide me step-by-step until this day, I would not have walked the correct path in life. In the past, I did not pursue the truth and expend myself for You. Today, I cannot be unworthy of Your kind intentions any longer. I want to earnestly pursue the truth and continue to follow You forward. God! Please give me the faith and strength to make the right choice." After praying, I read a passage of God's words: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose a lifetime of dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment. You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Reading God's words, I felt as if He was addressing me face-to-face: "In the future, you should earnestly pursue the truth. Don't live that vulgar life that you did in the past." Before, I did not pursue the truth, and I did not read God's words enough. I put my time and effort into doing business, wasting so much of my time. Now, I had to cherish the time ahead of me, and no matter how my family held me back, I

could not abandon this great opportunity to pursue the truth. I said to my husband, “These few years, I came down with illnesses trying to earn money. If I did not believe in God, I would have died long ago. As a believer in God, I am walking a bright and correct life path. Now that I have chosen this path, I must follow it to the end. You do not believe in God, but you cannot interfere with my freedom.” Seeing that he could not hold me back, from then on, my husband no longer bothered me about it. After making this choice, my heart felt so liberated. After that, I did my duty at all times.

Later, when I saw acquaintances driving in their cars, I would still feel a kind of loss: When I was doing business in the past and drove a car, people would think highly of me wherever I went. Now, I rode an e-bike instead. When past acquaintances and clients saw me, they wouldn’t say hello, and almost everyone I knew treated me coldly. Not only had I lost the halo I once had, I was also met with my family’s scolding: “You did 10-plus toilsome years of business and then voluntarily passed it on to others. If you don’t do business, let’s see who will still give you money to spend in the future. I don’t know what on earth you were thinking. You’re truly too foolish!” These offensive and probing words made me feel extremely disturbed. In those days, I was ill at ease and in low spirits every day. I thought, “If I had continued to do business, I could still get others to think highly of me. But now, without my business, if I don’t have money in the future, how am I supposed to live?” Before I knew it, I had become caught up in Satan’s temptations once again, and in spite of myself, I began to think of a backup plan. In the dead silence of night, I would often toss and turn and be unable to sleep. I began to reflect, “How come every time I am faced with the temptation of money, fame, and status, my heart always becomes disturbed?” I wanted very much to find the answer to this

question. Later on, I saw this passage of God's words: **“‘Money makes the world go round’ is a philosophy of Satan. It prevails among the whole of mankind, in every human society; you could say it is a trend. This is because it has been instilled in the heart of every single person, who at first did not accept this saying, but then gave it tacit acceptance when they came into contact with real life, and began to feel that these words were in fact true. Is this not a process of Satan corrupting man? ... Satan uses money to tempt people, and corrupts them into worshipping money and venerating material things. And how is this worship of money manifested in people? Do you feel that you could not survive in this world without any money, that even one day without money would be impossible? People's status is based on how much money they have, as is the respect they command. The backs of the poor are bent in shame, while the rich enjoy their high status. They stand tall and proud, speaking loudly and living arrogantly. What does this saying and trend bring to people? Is it not true that many people make any sacrifice in the pursuit of money? Do many people not lose their dignity and integrity in the pursuit of more money? Do many people not lose the opportunity to perform their duty and follow God for the sake of money? Is losing the chance to gain the truth and be saved not the greatest of all losses for people? Is Satan not sinister to use this method and this saying to corrupt man to such a degree? Is this not a malicious trick? As you progress from objecting to this popular saying to finally accepting it as truth, your heart falls completely into Satan's grasp, and therefore you inadvertently come to live by the saying”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique V). Through what God's words exposed, I found the root cause of why I could never break free from the shackles of money and fame. I thought back to what my father often taught me when I

was young, “Our family is poor, so when you grow up, you have to earn more money and bring honor to our name. Only if we have money will people have a good opinion of us.” My father’s words were imprinted on my memory. I thought that during these years, satanic poisons such as “Money makes the world go round,” and “Money isn’t everything, but without it, you can do nothing” were determining how I lived my life. I believed that only if I had money could I speak with my head held high and be held in high regard by others. In order to be thought highly of by others, I worked tirelessly day and night like a money-making robot. When I was tired or sleepy, I was unwilling to rest, and when I was sick, I was unwilling to go to the doctor. In fear of missing a bit of business, I put my whole heart into making money. Whenever a conflict occurred between my business and gatherings, I would take care of the business matters first and then go to the gathering. I never put pursuing the truth and doing my duty first, and when I was busy with my business, I simply would not attend gatherings. I was bogged down by money and could not extricate myself, and I became increasingly greedy and degenerate. From what was exposed by God’s words, I finally saw clearly Satan’s sinister motive of using these poisons to harm people. It wanted to take advantage of people’s ambitions and desires for pursuing money and fame to harm them and swallow them whole. If God had not exposed Satan’s sinister motive, it truly would have been tough for me to see through its cunning scheme, and I would have continued to be swept up in money’s whirlpool, giving my life to Satan. After experiencing this, I understood first-hand that no matter how much money, material enjoyment, and respect from others I possessed, my heart was still empty and in pain. My life did not have a shred of value or meaning. If I still could not let go of the interests in front of me and clung tightly to money, then money would absolutely torture me to death in the end. In this life, I was

fortunate enough to be following God, and to have heard the Creator's words with my own ears and do my duty as a created being. This was the thing in my life that had the most value and meaning. I could not throw away the truth in order to pursue material enjoyments and the respect of others. Instead, believing in and worshiping God was the objective I was pursuing. It was the time when the gospel of the kingdom was widely spreading, and as a created being, I was supposed to fulfill my responsibility and duty, and propagate and bear witness to the gospel so that more people could be saved by God. This was the value and meaning of my life. After understanding God's intention, I was no longer influenced by money. When I went to my parents' home, they no longer scolded me for not doing business, and sometimes they would even give me some money for living expenses. I knew very well that all of this was the grace and mercy of God, and I was full of gratitude for Him in my heart.

I thought that on this journey, if it were not for the guidance of God's words, I would not have broken away from the control of Satan's poison known as "Money makes the world go round," much less let go of my business and chosen to do my duty. I understood that money, fame, status, cars, houses, and so on—all those material things were as fleeting as a floating cloud. Only by pursuing the truth, living according to God's words, and doing one's duty as a created being could one live a life that had the most meaning and value. Just as God's words say: **"When people engage in careers in the world, all they think about is pursuing things like worldly trends, prestige and profit, and fleshly enjoyment. What's the implication of this? It is that your energy, time, and youth are all occupied and consumed by these things. Are they meaningful? What will you gain from them in the end? Even if you gain prestige and profit, it will still be hollow. What about if you change your way of**

living? If your time, energy, and mind are only occupied by the truth and the principles, and if you only think about positive things, like how to perform your duty well, and how to come before God, and if you expend your energy and time for these positive things, then what you gain will be different. What you gain will be the most substantive benefits. You will know how to live, how to comport yourself, how to face every kind of person, event, and thing. Once you know how to face every kind of person, event, and thing, to a large extent this will enable you to naturally submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. When you can naturally submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, then without even realizing it, you will become the kind of person that God accepts and loves. Think about it, isn't that a good thing? Perhaps you do not know this yet, but in the process of you living your life, and of you accepting God's words and the truth principles, you will imperceptibly come to live, to view people and things, and to comport yourself and act according to God's words. This means that you will unconsciously submit to God's words, submit to His requirements and satisfy them. Then you will have already become the kind of person that God accepts, trusts, and loves, without you even knowing it. Isn't that great? (It is.) Therefore, if you expend your energy and time to pursue the truth and to perform your duty well, what you gain in the end will be the most valuable things'' (The Word, Vol. 6.

On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (18)). After reading God's words, I better understood the value and significance of pursuing the truth. Although now I was not as rich as before and my clothes were not as bright and pretty, I was enjoying God's supply of life. This was something that one could not get in exchange for any amount of money. I thought of how, over the years, I had repeatedly rebelled against God and wounded His heart, and

how I had rejected His salvation many times in order to pursue money. I did not cherish the great opportunity to do my duty, but God always stayed by my side and waited for me to turn myself around; He did not give up on saving me. After I stopped doing business, God did not leave me in the cold or leave me hungry, and He continued to provide for me in every possible way. God's saving grace cannot be calculated, much less repaid. I will never regret choosing to follow God in this life. Thank God for His salvation. All glory be to God!

80. My Story of Working With a New Believer

By Claire, Myanmar

In April of 2020, I was selected to serve as a church deacon. At first, I was quite nervous and worried I would do poorly, but thanks to my brothers' and sisters' help and support, I gradually grasped some principles and was able to do some work. Later on, I was selected as a church leader and supervised even more work. Sometimes my upper leader would have high praise for me. For example, he'd say he wouldn't have to worry when assigning me work whereas he'd have to supervise others given the same assignment. This made me come to think I was doing quite well. Later on, a brother named Christopher that I had watered was selected as a church leader. Christopher had just average caliber, but he liked preaching the gospel and got decent results. I was happy he was selected as it reflected my own prowess, given that I had watered and cultivated him.

In early June 2022, I went to a village to check up on the gospel work. Christopher wasn't able to attend in person due to safety concerns, and so he partnered with me remotely. He would ask me about my situation in the village, and this would help us identify issues and rectify them in time. But, at the time, I thought because he was new to the faith and had just become a leader that he would be incapable of doing work. I had been a leader for two years and had grasped some principles; what's more, I had watered Christopher myself, so I didn't want to partner with him and didn't want him to participate in the work I supervised. One day, Christopher sent me a message: "What are your plans for the village going forward? Let's have a discussion when you have time." Seeing that message, I felt a bit resistant: "It's only been a few days and you're already asking about my work progress? It doesn't go that quickly. After all, this isn't my only project." I

didn't want to discuss the matter further with him, so I just replied, "I've just arrived and haven't started planning yet." He replied, "Then you should start planning as soon as possible." When I saw his message, I thought, "Can this project really be successful if I let someone with less caliber than me and less experience act as my partner?" I was not happy about the whole thing. After that, when Christopher would come to get updated on my work progress, I just wanted to ignore him. I barely discussed work with him at all, feeling that it was pointless to do so and that, in the end, I would have to do it all myself. So I arranged all the work in the village myself. One time, Christopher sent me a message that said, "There are a few newcomers in a neighboring village that won't preach the gospel for fear of being arrested. They used to be highly motivated, but recently they've stopped attending gatherings. Could you go give them some support?" When I saw his message, I thought, "I don't need you to tell me that. Obviously, they need my support, but I don't have time now. That village is pretty far away too, it's not as easy as just getting up and going. In the end, I'm the one that's going to end up going there anyway, not you. You don't really do anything, anyway, so there's no point in discussing with you. I have my own ideas and plans for these projects; and I'll proceed according to my own schedule, I don't need your guidance and checking-in." So I responded saying, "I haven't had time to go yet. The newcomers work during the day, and schedules haven't lined up." Christopher wrote back a one-line response, saying, "Oh, alright then." At that time, I felt he was feeling constrained by me. With anyone else, he would have inquired further into work details, but he didn't dare do so after I responded. After that, I basically stopped discussing work with Christopher, and when he tried to schedule a meeting with me, I'd always say, "I'm busy with other work. We can meet later when I have time." Even when I did have free time, I didn't seek him out

and would just go do other work. Gradually, the brothers and sisters in the three teams I supervised weren't able to partner harmoniously, and they would just work on their own and rarely discuss with each other. The atmosphere during our gatherings was less lively than other churches, and we got poor results in our gospel work. I had some awareness at the time, knowing that the problem was my fault, but I just made excuses for myself. I wasn't avoiding partnering with him, I'd say, I just had other work to do and didn't have much time to discuss with him. After that, I continued to work on my own. One time, Christopher invited me to meet with the supervisors of the three teams to summarize and fellowship on the problems we were having in our duties. Referencing God's words, Christopher said, "God's words say that when we encounter hangups in our duties, we should pause to summarize any issues and identify any deviations. Currently, we are not partnering harmoniously, everyone works on their own, we are not of one mind, and we haven't truly supported the brothers and sisters, which has led to progress stalling in our work. Going forward, we should communicate and discuss more and work together to get the job done well." He and the others also fellowshiped on good methods of practice that other churches had adopted, but I didn't feel like listening and kept practicing in my own way. As a result, the work I supervised didn't produce any results for a full three months. Later on, five officials from the village I was living in came to question me, attempted to search my phone and warned me saying that if they caught me preaching the gospel in the village they'd send me to the district government and let them deal with me. I was a bit struck by what had happened and thought, "Why would this happen? These few months I've had poor results in my duty and rarely discussed work with Christopher—is God using this situation to remind me to take lessons from

these setbacks? If I don't reflect and rectify my issues, I might not be doing this duty for much longer."

One day at the end of August, I met online with a few co-workers to discuss whether I should leave that village. A team leader asked me, "You haven't had any results in that village for the last three months, why do you think that is?" I said I wasn't sure. The team leader then said, "Shouldn't you reflect a little bit on this issue? The brothers and sisters have been saying you act arbitrarily and don't partner with others. You aren't available when they seek you out to discuss work. We had you go to this village to motivate the brothers and sisters and promote the gospel work, but you haven't done what you were supposed to do." Another team leader said, "If you haven't done what you were assigned to do then you should come back!" I could feel my face going red and each of their words was like a gut punch. In that moment, I just wanted to crawl into a corner. I felt so wronged: I wasn't completely refusing to cooperate and it wasn't completely my fault we weren't getting results. The government was persecuting us heavily and I was in charge of other projects as well. How could they say I hadn't done what I was supposed to do? The team leader asked if I had any ideas, but I didn't know what to say, so I just replied, saying, "I'll head back then." Then I quickly ended the call. After hanging up, I collapsed on my bed and burst into tears. The team leaders' words kept replaying in my mind: "What are you still doing there if you haven't done what you were supposed to do?" "If you haven't done what you were assigned to do then you should come back!" The more I thought, the more negative I became. During the next few days, I continually prayed to God and my leader fellowshiped with and supported me. This allowed me to quiet my thoughts and reflect on my state during that time. I thought, "I've been doing everything on my own recently. I looked down on Christopher

and wouldn't discuss work with him. When he tried to talk to me about work, I'd always say I was busy. In reality, I just didn't want him to participate in my work. I was clearly mired in my corrupt disposition and delaying work, but when pruned, I argued back and lacked even the slightest bit of reason." I thought of how the brothers and sisters said I acted arbitrarily in my duty and didn't discuss work with others—this was a very serious problem, so I looked for a relevant passage of God's words to read. Almighty God says: **"On the surface, it may seem like some antichrists have assistants or partners, but the fact is that when something happens, no matter how right others may be, antichrists never listen to what they have to say. They don't even take it into account, much less discuss it or fellowship about it. They don't pay any attention at all, as if others may as well not be there. When antichrists listen to what others have to say, they are merely going through the motions or performing an act for others to witness. But when it ultimately comes time for the final decision, it is the antichrists who call the shots; anyone else's words are wasted breath, they don't count at all. For example, when two people are responsible for something, and one of them has the essence of an antichrist, what is exhibited in this person? No matter what it is, they and they alone are the one who gets the ball rolling, who asks the questions, who sorts things out, and who comes up with a solution. And most of the time, they keep their partner completely in the dark. What is their partner in their eyes? Not their deputy, but simply window dressing. In the antichrist's eyes, their partner simply doesn't exist. Whenever there is a problem, the antichrist thinks it over, and once they have decided on a course of action, they inform everyone else that this is how it is to be done, and no one is allowed to question it. What is the essence of their cooperation**

with others? Fundamentally it is to have the final say, never discussing problems with anyone else, taking sole responsibility for the work, and turning their partners into window dressing. They always act alone and never cooperate with anyone. They never discuss or communicate about their work with anyone else, they often make decisions alone and deal with issues alone, and in many things, other people find out how things were finished or handled only after the deed is done. Other people tell them, ‘All problems have to be discussed with us. When did you handle that person? How did you handle him? How did we not know about it?’ They neither provide an explanation nor pay any attention; to them, their partners have no use at all, and are just decoration or window dressing. When something happens, they think it over, make up their own mind, and act however they wish to. No matter how many people there are around them, it’s as if these people are not there. To the antichrist, they may as well be air. Given this, is there any real aspect to their partnership with others? Not at all, they are just going through the motions and acting a part. Others say to them, ‘Why don’t you fellowship with everyone else when you come across a problem?’ They reply, ‘What do they know? I’m the team leader, it’s up to me to decide.’ The others say, ‘And why didn’t you fellowship with your partner?’ They reply, ‘I told him, he had no opinion.’ They use other people having no opinion or not being able to think for themselves as excuses to obfuscate the fact that they are acting as a law unto themselves. And this is not followed by the slightest introspection. It would be impossible for this kind of person to accept the truth. This is a problem with the antichrist’s nature” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God exposes how antichrists act arbitrarily, do not cooperate with others, make

decisions on their own, always have the final word, don't discuss work with their partners, and just go ahead after deciding by themselves. They do not adopt good suggestions made by others and often disparage others, thinking they have brilliant ideas. In the eyes of antichrists, partners are little more than background noise or props on a set. I realized that I was acting like an antichrist: Ever since I started partnering with Christopher, I looked down on him for his poor caliber, inferior work capability and comparative lack of experience. I didn't want him to participate in my project. I thought that I had served as a leader for longer than him, understood more than him, and could arrange the work for myself; I felt that he couldn't provide any good suggestions, so it was meaningless to discuss with him. When he asked me about my plans for the work, I was resistant and felt that he made himself seem like my superior by asking about my progress right away, so I just ignored him. When some brothers and sisters didn't dare do their duty for fear of being arrested and Christopher asked if I'd supported them, he was just carrying out his responsibility, and yet I arrogantly thought, "Who did he think he was ordering me around when he couldn't resolve the issue himself?" Later on, when we gathered to summarize issues, the brothers and sisters shared some paths of practice, but I didn't adopt them. Because I acted arbitrarily, didn't partner with others or take their suggestions, I continually failed to get results in my duty. I always did my duty according to my own beliefs, doing whatever I thought right, and didn't partner with others at all, which resulted in delays to the work. I was doing evil! Reflecting on this, I was able to accept the team leaders' pruning. My behavior had already negatively influenced the church's work. If they hadn't pruned me like that, I wouldn't have reflected on myself or recognized how serious my problem was. Pruning is a form of God's love!

Afterward, I came before God in prayer, seeking why I couldn't partner with others in my duty and always had to have the last word. I found a passage of God's words that really spoke to my state. Almighty God says: **"You may have performed your duties for several years, but there has been no discernible progress in your life entry, you merely understand a few superficial doctrines, and have no true knowledge of the disposition and essence of God, no breakthroughs to speak of—if this is your stature today, what will you be liable to do? What revelations of corruption will you have? (Arrogance and conceitedness.) Will your arrogance and conceitedness intensify, or remain unchanged? (They will intensify.) Why will they intensify? (Because we will think ourselves highly qualified.) And on what basis do people judge the level of their own qualifications? On how many years they have performed a certain duty, on how much experience they have gained, is it not? And with this being the case, will you not gradually start thinking in terms of seniority? For example, a certain brother has believed in God for many years and performed a duty for a long time, so he is the most qualified to speak; a certain sister has not been here long, and although she has a little caliber, she is not experienced in performing this duty, and hasn't believed in God for long, so she is the least qualified to talk. The person who is most qualified to speak thinks to themselves, 'Since I have seniority, that means the performance of my duty is up to standard, and my pursuit has reached its peak, and there is nothing I should strive for or enter into. I have performed this duty well, I have more or less completed this work, God should be satisfied.' And in this way they begin to grow complacent. Does this indicate they have entered the truth reality? They have stopped making any progress. They have still not gained the truth or the life, and yet they think**

themselves highly qualified, and talk in terms of seniority, and wait for God's reward. Is this not the revelation of an arrogant disposition? When people are not 'highly qualified,' they know to be cautious, they remind themselves not to make mistakes; once they believe themselves to be highly qualified, they grow arrogant, and start to have a high opinion of themselves, and are liable to be complacent. At such times, are they not likely to ask for rewards and a crown from God, as Paul did? (Yes.) What is the relationship between man and God? This is not the relationship between the Creator and created beings. It is nothing more than a transactional relationship. And when that is the case, people have no relationship with God, and God will likely hide His face from them—which is a dangerous sign” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only With Fear of God Can One Tread Upon the Path of Salvation). God exposes how if someone doesn't pursue the truth and come to know themselves, they will think they have capital and experience after doing a duty for some time and will start asserting their seniority, looking down on others, swelling with arrogance, failing to seek the truth principles and partner with others in their duty, acting arbitrarily, doing things as they please and walking a road of resistance to God. From the time I entered the faith, I always did a duty and had been a leader for two years. I thought that I had been in the faith for a long time, had good work capability and had some work experience, so I became arrogant. I was more than happy to cultivate others and check up on their work, but I was displeased when Christopher became my partner and began participating in my work. I kept thinking that I was the one who had watered and cultivated him, that his caliber was inferior to mine, and that he was just starting and didn't have much experience, so I didn't want him to be a part of my work. When he asked me if I had supported the newcomers and what my work schedule

was, I became fed up and would just answer him perfunctorily. I didn't think it was necessary to discuss with him, and even if I did, he wouldn't have any worthwhile suggestions. I thought I could do it without him, so I didn't discuss or partner with him and made most decisions and arrangements myself. I saw him as a mere prop. God demands that we learn to partner with others in our duties, this is a key principle for doing our duties, but I ignored God's demand and the principles of God's house. I always thought I was fine on my own, could do the work myself and didn't need to partner with anyone else. I thought I could handle all of it and didn't need anyone to supervise my work. How arrogant and conceited I was! My arrogant disposition led me to have no regard for others and no space for God in my heart. I didn't have a God-fearing heart and was walking a path of antagonism toward God. When I first arrived in the village, I was full of faith and wanted to fulfill my duty to satisfy God. I never thought things would go like they did. How could I have been so arrogant and numb? I didn't have the slightest awareness of the mistaken path I was walking. If I kept on like that, I would become an antichrist that disrupted God's work and would ultimately be exposed and eliminated by God, after which my life of faith would be over. Realizing all this, I felt a bit afraid and silently prayed to God, "Oh God, I have disrupted the church's work. Now I recognize my corruption and the severity of my issues. I want to repent and do not want to resist You with my corrupt disposition."

Then, I came across another passage of God's words: **"In God's house, no matter what you do, you are not engaging in your own undertaking; it is the work of God's house, it is God's work. You must constantly bear this knowledge and awareness in mind and say, 'This is not my own affair; I am doing my duty and fulfilling my responsibility. I am doing the church's work. This is a task God entrusted to me and I**

am doing it for Him. This is my duty, not my own private affair.’ This is the first thing people should understand. If you treat a duty as your own personal affairs, and do not seek the truth principles when you act, and carry it out according to your own motives, views, and agenda, then you will very likely make mistakes. So how should you act if you make a very clear distinction between your duty and your own personal affairs, and are aware that this is a duty? (Seek what God asks, and seek principles.) That’s right. If something happens to you and you don’t understand the truth, and you have some idea but things still aren’t clear to you, then you must find brothers and sisters who understand the truth to fellowship with; this is seeking the truth, and before all else, this is the attitude you should have toward your duty. You shouldn’t decide things based on what you think is appropriate, and then slam the gavel down and say case closed—this easily leads to problems. ... God is not concerned with what happens to you each day, or how much work you do, how much effort you put in—what He looks at is what your attitude toward these things is. And what does the attitude with which you do these things, and the way you do them, relate to? It relates to whether or not you pursue the truth, and also to your life entry. God looks at your life entry, at the path that you walk. If you walk the path of pursuing the truth, and you have life entry, you will be able to cooperate harmoniously with others when you perform your duties, and you will easily perform your duties in a way that is **adequate” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). God’s words are quite clear. Doing our duty in God’s house does not entail doing our own thing as we please with no involvement of other people. Our duty is part of the work of God’s house, and if we act arbitrarily and do not cooperate, we’re liable to disrupt and**

disturb the work. I also learned that God does not measure people based on how long they've been in the faith, how much work they've done, or how much experience they have in their duty, but rather based on their attitude toward the truth, and whether they walk the path of pursuing the truth in doing their duties. If I didn't seek the truth, didn't accept good suggestions from others, and had to always have the last word, I would not get good results in my duty. I always took my supposed caliber and my having been a leader for a while and having experience as capital. I thought that with these qualifications, I'd fulfill my duty well. In truth, having that experience and caliber didn't mean I had truth principles; they were just tools I could use in my duty. I realized I took experience and caliber as the truth principle and thought that I understood the truth and acted according to principle. I became increasingly arrogant, looked down on brothers and sisters and did whatever I pleased. As a result, after three months of work, I didn't produce any results at all. I realized that to do one's duty well, it doesn't matter how long one has been a believer, how much one has previously contributed, or how much experience one has. What's key is to seek the truth, act according to principle and partner harmoniously with others.

Later on, I read another two passages of God's words that gave me a clearer path of how to partner harmoniously with others. God says: **"Harmonious cooperation involves many things. At the very least, one of these many things is to allow others to speak and make different suggestions. If you are genuinely reasonable, no matter what kind of work you do, you must first learn to seek the truth principles, and you should also take the initiative to seek the opinions of others. As long as you take every suggestion seriously, and then resolve problems with one heart and mind, you will essentially achieve harmonious cooperation. This way, you will encounter far fewer difficulties in your duty. No**

matter what problems come up, it will be easy to solve and deal with them. This is the effect of harmonious cooperation. Sometimes there are disputes over trivial matters, but as long as these don't affect the work, they will not be a problem. However, on key matters and major matters involving the work of the church, you must reach a consensus and seek truth to resolve them. ... You must let go of leadership titles, let go of the filthy air of status, treat yourself as an ordinary person, stand on the same level as others, and have a responsible attitude toward your duty. If you always treat your duty as an official title and status, or as a kind of laurel, and imagine that others are there to work for and serve your position, this is troublesome, and God will detest and be disgusted with you. If you believe that you are equal to others, you just have a little more of a commission and responsibility from God, if you can learn to put yourself on an even footing with them, and can even stoop to asking what other people think, and if you can earnestly, closely, and attentively listen to what they say, then you will cooperate in harmony with others. What effect will this harmonious cooperation achieve? The effect is huge. You will gain things you never had before, which are the light of truth and the realities of life; you will discover others' virtues and learn from their strengths. There's something else: You conceive of other people as stupid, dim-witted, foolish, inferior to you, but when you listen to their opinions, or other people open up to you, you will unwittingly discover that no one is quite as ordinary as you think, that everyone can offer up different thoughts and ideas, and that everyone has their own merits. If you learn to harmoniously cooperate, beyond just helping you learn from the strengths of others, it can reveal your arrogance and self-righteousness, and stop you from imagining that you are clever. When you no longer

consider yourself smarter and better than everyone else, you will cease to live in this narcissistic and self-appreciative state. And that will protect you, will it not? Such is the lesson you should learn and the benefit you should gain from cooperating with others” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). **“Do you think anyone is perfect? No matter how strong people are, or how capable and talented, they still are not perfect. People must recognize this, it is fact, and it is the attitude that people should have to correctly approach their own merits and strengths or faults; this is the rationality that people should possess. With such rationality, you can properly deal with your own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others, and this will enable you to work alongside them harmoniously. If you have understood this aspect of the truth and can enter this aspect of the truth reality, then you can get along harmoniously with your brothers and sisters, drawing on their strong points to offset any weaknesses you have. In this way, no matter what duty you are performing or what you are doing, you will always get better at it and have God’s blessing”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God’s words, I found a path of practice. In partnership, we should stand on the same level as others and learn to listen to them closely and actively ask about what we don’t understand. Practicing in this way we can discover the strengths of brothers and sisters and areas in which they are stronger than us. Then we won’t look down on them and will stop being so self-satisfied and arbitrary in our behavior. We also should have a clearer understanding of ourselves and stop holding ourselves aloft. We have to learn to identify other people’s strengths and have the right attitude toward their weaknesses. Looking back, despite having served as a leader for two years, I wasn’t talented at preaching the gospel and

needed support when checking up on gospel work. As for Christopher, he hadn't been in the faith for long, but he had always preached the gospel, got great results and had converted many people. He had more experience when it came to preaching the gospel, and so I should have actively sought his help. Also, Christopher was very responsible in his duty, bore a burden in his work, actively sought me out to summarize our work and would implement good practices from other churches. These were all strengths that I could learn from. I thought about how I used to be too arrogant and I couldn't recognize Christopher's strengths, I even looked down on him. I didn't accept his suggestions and didn't let him participate in my work. I was nothing and yet I was so self-assured—how embarrassing. I didn't have the slightest bit of self-awareness. Had I been able to cooperate well with Christopher before, the work wouldn't have been delayed. Thinking back, I felt so regretful. My past transgressions were irredeemable, but I was willing to do my duty well going forward. I would discuss and communicate with others when facing issues, prioritize the church's interests, learn to partner with others and stop going down that old path.

Later on, I left the village. I was assigned different projects and received a new partner. This time I was partnered up with Sister Mina. I was happy to partner with her harmoniously to get our duties done well. Later on, I slowly began to notice that even though Mina was older than me, she hadn't been in the faith or done her duty for as long as I had. As for how to oversee and check up on work, she was still lacking. Sometimes, I would also hear the brothers and sisters bringing up certain problems of hers. My arrogant disposition began to reemerge. I began to think I was the key role in our work and Sister Mina was just there to practice. One time, when we had to write a work proposal, our leader specifically told us that we should discuss the work together, but I thought to myself, "This isn't a

hard assignment, I could easily handle it myself and there's no need for both of us to work on it. It's not like I can't do it myself." After the gathering, I had wanted to just go ahead on the work by myself, but Mina called me right away and I knew she'd want to have a discussion. I really didn't feel like it though, so I didn't pick up the phone. Afterward, I felt a bit guilty. I thought about how my arrogance and unwillingness to partner with Christopher had obstructed work previously, if I continued on like that, it would certainly affect our work. So I prayed to God, saying, "Oh God, Mina proactively sought me out to discuss work, but I was arrogant and didn't want to partner with her. God, I don't want to continue acting arbitrarily and disturbing the church's work. Please guide me to stop living by my arrogant disposition so that I may partner with Mina harmoniously." I then recalled a passage of God's words: **"You must achieve harmonious cooperation for the purpose of the work of God, for the benefit of the church, and so as to spur your brothers and sisters onward. You should coordinate with one another, each amending the other and arriving at a better work outcome, so as to show consideration for God's intentions. This is what true cooperation is, and only those who engage in it will gain true entry"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Serve As the Israelites Did). God's words deeply impacted me. To do my duty well, I had to learn to partner with Mina harmoniously and stop living by my arrogant disposition and acting arbitrarily. With that, I called Mina and discussed our work arrangements going forward. Mina shared her ideas with me and I found them to be quite good, so I ended up implementing them. In no time, we had put together a plan much faster than I had previously been able to on my own. I was really happy. It wasn't some big achievement, but it felt great to forsake myself and practice according to God's words. After that, I learned to partner with other brothers and sisters, and I found that we got

better results in our work with every passing month. I gave thanks to God in my heart!

81. The Consequences of Craving for Comfort

By Bai Lu, China

Dear Lin Yi,

I have received your letter. Time passes so quickly. In a blink of an eye, we haven't seen each other for almost a year. In your letter, you were asking me what I've gained so far from doing my duty. For a moment, I didn't even know where to begin, but the most memorable experience was the reassignment of my duties, which made me gain some knowledge of my nature of indulging in comfort and ease. At this point, you must be wondering what I have experienced. Let me tell you all about it.

In January of this year, I was in charge of the text-based work. Since I was new to the role, hadn't mastered many of the principles, and didn't know how to cooperate, I learned and trained with a sister who I was partnered with. Usually, I also took the initiative to look into the work of the different groups. Later, each of those groups sought advice on quite a lot of questions, and I had to write letters to fellowship and address their states as well as the deviations in their work. I was busy from morning until late at night every day. As time went on, I grumbled a little in my heart, "To resolve these states, I have to carefully contemplate the root cause of each problem, and find the relevant words of God and principles, which requires a lot of thinking. It's really exhausting!" I didn't want my brain to be so tense all the time, so I hoped the brothers and sisters would ask fewer questions. That way I could be a little more relaxed. Later, two more sisters were partnered with us. I was very happy, thinking that this would reduce my workload, and then I wouldn't have to worry as much or need to tire myself out so much. Sometimes, when I saw a brother or sister in a bad state and that results of their work were declining, I thought I should

quickly fellowship with them to resolve it. But then I also thought, “I can’t completely see through these problems either. I’ll have to spend time pondering and find relevant words of God and principles. That will be too much of a bother! It’d be better to let the sisters I’m partnered with resolve them.” So, I did not bother with them anymore. Just like this, whenever I encountered any complicated problem, I found it troublesome, and pushed it onto my partnered sisters to resolve. I bore less and less of a burden in my duties, and just followed the routine and handled my daily tasks each day. If there was a bit more work assigned to me or if it was a bit harder, I would get upset. I only focused on doing simple tasks and didn’t put effort into pursuing truth, resulting in me not making much progress. My partnered sisters pointed out that I lacked a sense of burden in my duty and advised me to reflect on and resolve this. But I didn’t take it seriously. Gradually, I found it harder and harder to see problems clearly and often dozed off, and my work efficiency became very low.

Later, the leaders noticed that I lacked a sense of burden in my duty and that I wasn’t getting results, so I was dismissed. Only then did I start to reflect on myself. One day, I read these words of God: **“Lazy people can’t do anything. To summarize it in two words, they are useless people; they have a second-class disability. No matter how good the caliber of lazy people is, it is nothing more than window dressing; even though they have good caliber, it is of no use. They are too lazy—they know what they are supposed to do, but they don’t do it, and even if they know something is a problem, they do not seek the truth to resolve it, and though they know what hardships they should suffer in order for the work to be effective, they are unwilling to endure these worthwhile hardships—so they cannot gain any truths, and they cannot do any real work. They do not wish to endure the hardships people are supposed**

to; they only know to indulge in comfort, enjoy times of joy and leisure, and enjoy a free and relaxed life. Are they not useless? People who cannot endure hardship don't deserve to live. Those who always wish to live the life of a parasite are people without conscience or reason; they are beasts, and such people are unfit even to perform labor. Because they cannot endure hardship, even when they do perform labor, they are not able to do it well, and if they wish to gain the truth, there is even less hope of that. Someone who cannot suffer and does not love the truth is a useless person; they are unqualified even to perform labor. They are a beast, without a shred of humanity. Such people must be eliminated; only this accords with God's intentions" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). When I saw these terms in God's words—"useless people," "a second-class disability," "beast," "unfit even to perform labor," and "don't deserve to live,"—it pierced my heart. I felt God's disgust toward lazy people. God had exalted me and showed me grace, allowing me to perform the duty of a supervisor, so that I could train in using the truth to resolve problems. Regardless of how much I could fellowship and resolve, I should have tried my best to do it; this was the responsibility that I should have performed. But when I saw the brothers' and sisters' states were bad and the results of their work were declining, I felt that it was too much trouble and mentally exhausting to resolve, so I just passed this work onto other people. I didn't even do what was within my ability. When I encountered more complicated problems, I could clearly resolve some of them with careful pondering, but I didn't want to put in the effort and pay the price, so I used excuses like "I couldn't see through it" or "I didn't know how" as a reason to pass them onto the sisters I was partnered with. I only did some simple work every day, and I did not have an ounce of responsibility toward my duty, and

drifted aimlessly through each day. Wasn't this just being a parasite in God's house? I thought about how some brothers and sisters did not have very good caliber, but they were able to put their hearts into performing their duties, and went all out, and so their attitude toward their duties was acceptable to God. Whereas my caliber wasn't too poor and I was able to resolve some problems, but I always treasured the flesh and indulged in comfort, and was not even willing to toil and endure hardships when performing my duty. I truly had no conscience or reason. How was I fit to be a supervisor! God hated and was disgusted by my attitude toward my duty. If this continued, I wouldn't even be able to labor well, and would only be spurned and eliminated by God. Realizing this, I said a prayer, willing to really reflect on myself.

After that, I pondered, what was the root cause of me always indulging in comfort and not being willing to worry and endure hardships? Then, I saw these words of God: **“For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don't have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People's thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). **“Are you content to**

live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have

a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). From God's word, I understood that my constant pursuit of fleshly comfort was because I followed "Life is all about eating well and dressing nice," "Life is short, so enjoy it while you can," "Treat yourself well," "Drink today's wine today, and worry about tomorrow, tomorrow," "Life is short, so why make things hard for yourself?" and other such satanic philosophies, which regard physical comfort as the greatest pursuit in life. Under the control of these wrong views, I always pursued comfort, thinking that people should be good to themselves and not work too hard. Looking back, my parents spoiled me from a young age at home. They did everything for me so I wouldn't have to worry about anything, and I grew up like a flower in a greenhouse, under their careful protection. Since I was used to a comfortable life, I was always afraid of putting in effort and exhausting myself. When I was in college, I saw some classmates working hard and studying late to prepare for graduate school, but I was dismissive toward this. I thought, "Life is only a few decades. Why tire yourself out so badly? A bachelor's degree is enough. Just find a job that isn't too tiring and pays decently." When I came to the church to do my duty, I still held this view. I always indulged in comfort, and I was unwilling to put in any

effort or trouble myself. Whenever I encountered complex or difficult tasks, I'd push them onto others. I'd choose easy tasks and avoid hard ones, so I progressed very slowly. It was such a great honor that God's house cultivated me to do a leadership duty, but I didn't cherish this and always heeded my flesh. When I saw brothers and sisters feeling negative, and the effectiveness of the work declining, I didn't care, and I even passed difficult tasks onto others. I wasn't fulfilling my responsibilities at all. I was so selfish and despicable! I always indulged in comfort, chose easy duties over hard ones, and was slippery and deceitful. Even though I didn't put in any effort, I didn't make any progress either. I found it harder and harder to see problems clearly, and couldn't even handle what I used to do well. Just like the Lord Jesus said: **"Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has"** (Matthew 13:12). I thought of how God hopes adults can take on responsibility, focus on proper things, and do their proper duties, but my heart was only focused on physical comfort. I valued physical ease above all else, becoming more and more decadent and degenerate, losing more of my human likeness by the day. I couldn't continue down this wrong path. I had to seek the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition and do my duty properly.

I then read more of God's words: **"What is the value of a person's life? Is it merely for the sake of indulging in fleshly pleasures such as eating, drinking, and being entertained? (No, it is not.) Then what is it? Please share your thoughts.** (To fulfill the duty of a created being, this at least is what a person should achieve in their life.) **That is correct. ... In one respect, it is about fulfilling the duty of a created being. In another, it is about doing everything within your ability and capacity to the best that you can, at least reaching a point where your conscience does not**

accuse you, where you can be at peace with your own conscience and be proven acceptable in the eyes of others. Taking it a step further, throughout your life, regardless of the family you were born into, your educational background, or your caliber, you must have some understanding of the principles that people ought to comprehend in life. For example, what kind of path people should walk, how they should live, and how to live a meaningful life—you should at least explore a bit of the true value of life. This life cannot be lived in vain, and one cannot come to this earth in vain. In another respect, during your lifetime, you must fulfill your mission; this is the most important. We're not talking about completing a great mission, duty, or responsibility; but at the very least, you should accomplish something"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (6)). From God's words, I came to understand, that the value of life is not in eating, drinking, having fun and indulging in the flesh, but in fulfilling the duty of a created being and gaining God's approval. God ordained for me to be born in the last days, to hear His voice, and to do my duty, and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. God doesn't want me to indulge in comfort and lead a life of mediocrity, wasting my life. God hopes I can pursue the truth and do my duty well, so that I can achieve a change in disposition, be saved by God, and live out a true human likeness. Thinking of how I tended not to focus on life entry, only skimmed through God's words, my life experience was shallow, and my understanding of the truth was limited. I couldn't see clearly the states and difficulties of my brothers and sisters, which showed that I didn't understand the truth of this aspect. This was the time when I needed to seek and equip myself with the truth, and if I could develop a real sense of burden to seek the truth and find God's words, I would understand more truth and grow in life more quickly. But I had missed so many

opportunities to gain the truth just for the sake of temporary comfort and enjoyment, hindering my life entry. I had left so many regrets in my duty. I had been truly foolish and stupid! Now I finally realized, that no matter how much physical comfort I might enjoy, it would be only temporary and have no real value, and that if I didn't seek the truth properly, was always perfunctory in my duty, and kept trying to deceive God, I'd just end up being revealed and eliminated, and that would result in eternal punishment, and by then, no amount of regret, weeping, or gnashing of teeth would help.

Later, during my devotionals, I focused on reading God's words related to resolving my desire for indulging in comfort, and I recorded my understandings. Two months later, the supervisor arranged for me to do my duty again, and I was very grateful. When I found out I was tasked with supervising a church, I was stunned. This church had many newcomers and many issues and solving these problems would take a lot of effort. But then I thought of how, in the past, I always tried to avoid worries and pushed problems onto others. Now, being assigned to supervise this church was God giving me a chance, allowing me to train to fellowship the truth and solve problems. This was all to make up for my shortcomings, and it was beneficial for my life entry. So, I took on the task. At first, I could cooperate actively, but after a few rounds of fellowship, when the results weren't obvious, I became discouraged. I felt this was all too difficult and stressful. When I thought this way, I realized I was just considering my own physical interests again, so I ate and drank God's words related to my state. There was a passage of God's words that really moved me. God says: **"People who truly believe in God perform their duties willingly, without calculating their own gains and losses. No matter whether you are someone who pursues the truth, you must rely on your conscience and reason and really make an effort when you perform your duty. What**

does it mean to really make an effort? If you are merely satisfied with making some token effort, and suffering a little physical hardship, but you do not take your duty seriously at all or seek the truth principles, then this is nothing more than being perfunctory—it is not really making an effort. The key to making an effort is putting your heart into it, fearing God in your heart, being considerate of God's intentions, being terrified of rebelling against God and hurting God, and suffering any hardship in order to perform your duty well and satisfy God: If you have a God-loving heart in this way, you will be able to perform your duty properly. If there is no fear of God in your heart, you will have no burden when you perform your duty, will have no interest in it, and will inevitably be perfunctory, and go through the motions, without producing any real effect—which is not performing a duty. If you truly have a sense of burden, and feel like performing your duty is your personal responsibility, and that if you don't, you are not fit to live, and are a beast, that only if you perform your duty properly are you worthy of being called a human being, and can face your own conscience—if you have this sense of burden when you perform your duty—then you will be able to do everything conscientiously, and will be able to seek the truth and do things according to the principles, and so will be able to do your duty properly and satisfy God. If you are worthy of the mission that God has given you, and of all that God has sacrificed for you and His expectations of you, then this is really **making an effort**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One's Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). From God's words, I came to understand that those who willingly and faithfully do their duties are the true people of God's house. They don't consider their personal physical interests, and they pay a real price, putting in their utmost

efforts. Such people are responsible and trustworthy, and they are people of conscience and reason. Although they may endure some physical suffering, they can satisfy God, achieve inner peace, and live a meaningful life. In contrast, when the work was difficult and the results weren't good, I felt that the work was too hard and stressful, so I would start thinking about my own comfort and want to shrink back. When I used to indulge in comfort, avoid hard duties in favor of easy ones, and act cunningly, although my body didn't suffer, my heart was in darkness. I couldn't feel God's presence, and I had no peace or joy. I didn't want to end up like that again. I had to treat my duty with an honest heart, and no matter how much I could cooperate, I had to do my best and fulfill my responsibilities. So, I sought the truth and fellowshiped to address the viewpoints and difficulties of my brothers and sisters. After a while, there was some progress in the work, and I thanked God from the bottom of my heart. Later, when I encountered things, I consciously rebelled against my flesh. Although there was a lot of work to handle every day, and I had no free time, I didn't find myself feeling worn out. In practicing in this way, I felt ever closer to God, and I found some new ways to cooperate in my duty. I found peace and ease in my heart by acting according to God's words.

Well, I'll stop here for now. Have you gained a lot this year too? Feel free to write to me and share your gains and understandings.

Yours sincerely,

Bai Lu

October 15, 2023

82. Persevering Through Adversity

By Anna, Myanmar

In May of 2022, members of several villages accepted Almighty God's work in the last days. But not soon after that, many newcomers stopped coming to gatherings. After looking into it we learned that armed soldiers were doing night patrols and would arrest anyone holding gatherings. In other areas, some brothers and sisters had already been fined, arrested and incarcerated for their faith. The newcomers in those villages were so scared that they didn't dare attend gatherings. It was then that my leader assigned Isa and me to go support the newcomers. At that time, Isa and I were watering newcomers separately.

One night before I had returned home, Isa suddenly called me and said our host sister was afraid of being fined or jailed and was telling us to move out. I thought, "Where can we possibly find a host family at this hour?" Later on, we ended up trying Sister Yana, but Yana and her son were scared of being arrested and didn't dare host us, so we were left homeless in the middle of the night. I felt so sad and wronged. It was raining that night, Isa and I didn't know where to go and we wanted to leave that place, but there were still so many newcomers that needed watering and support. If we left there and the newcomers didn't receive watering, they'd be even less likely to stand strong on their own and we would be shirking our responsibility. Realizing this, I decided to stay and see if anyone else would be willing to host us. Later, a newcomer was willing to let us stay at his house, but we could only stay there one night. At the time I cried, thinking, "I can only stay there one night and then I will be homeless. I want to work but face great obstacles; we aren't familiar with the area, and if the government finds out we are preaching the gospel we'll be arrested and persecuted." I

felt discouraged and wanted to quit. When my supervisor heard that I wanted to leave, she said, “Newcomers do not understand the truth and live in timidity and fear—they need watering and support. We can’t quit on the newcomers, see if you can find a way to stay. We must learn to rely on God, He will prepare a place for you.” Her advice made me realize that I should rely more on God during this difficult time. So I prayed to God, asking Him to open a way for us. After that, while going through some messages on our group chat, I came upon this passage of God’s words: **“From when God entrusted the construction of the ark to Noah, at no point did Noah think to himself, ‘When is God going to destroy the world? When is He going to give me the signal that He will do so?’ Rather than pondering such matters, Noah earnestly took each thing that God had told him to heart, and then carried each one out. After accepting what was entrusted to him by God, Noah set about carrying out and executing the construction of the ark spoken of by God as the most important thing in his life, without the slightest hint of carelessness. Days passed, years went by, day after day, year after year. God was never supervising Noah, spurring him on, but throughout all this time, Noah persevered in the important task entrusted to him by God. Every word and phrase that God had uttered was inscribed on Noah’s heart like words carved upon a stone tablet. Heedless of the changes in the outside world, of the ridicule of those around him, of the hardship involved, or of the difficulties he encountered, he persevered, throughout, in what had been entrusted to him by God, never despairing or thinking of giving up. God’s words were inscribed upon Noah’s heart, and they had become his everyday reality. Noah prepared each of the materials needed for building the ark, and the form and specifications for the ark commanded by God gradually took shape**

with each careful strike of Noah's hammer and chisel. Throughout wind and rain, and regardless of how people mocked or slandered him, Noah's life proceeded in this manner, year after year. God secretly watched Noah's every action, without ever uttering another word to him, and His heart was touched by Noah. Noah, however, neither knew nor felt this; from start to finish, he simply built the ark, and assembled every kind of living creature, in unwavering fealty to God's words. In Noah's heart, there was no higher instruction that he ought to follow and carry out: God's words were his lifelong direction and goal. So, no matter what God said to him, no matter what God asked him to do, commanded him to do, Noah completely accepted it, and took it to heart; he regarded it as the most important thing in his life, and handled it accordingly. He not only did not forget, he not only kept it in his heart, but also realized it in his daily life, using his life to accept and carry out God's commission. And in this way, plank by plank, the ark was built. Noah's every move, his every day, were dedicated to the words and commandments of God. It might not have seemed that Noah was performing a momentous undertaking, but in the eyes of God, everything Noah did, even every step he took to achieve something, every labor performed by his hand—they were all precious, and deserving of remembrance, and worthy of emulation by this mankind. Noah adhered to what had been entrusted to him by God. He was unwavering in his belief that every word uttered by God was true; of this, he had no doubt. And as a result, the ark came to completion, and every manner of living creature was able to live upon it” (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Two: How Noah and Abraham Obeyed God's Words and Submitted to Him (Part One)). Noah heard God's words, and kept His words and commission close to his heart; he considered the making of the ark the most

important aspect of his life, and the completion of the ark his greatest responsibility. For days upon days, years upon years, and despite the suffering, fatigue, hardships, inclement weather, slander, ridicule and abandonment by others, he persevered in his God-given commission and never once considered quitting. He did this because he had a God-fearing heart, so God's every word was engraved in his heart. Comparing Noah's behavior to my own, I always wanted my duty to go smoothly and to never encounter hardship. When difficulties arose in my duty and I had nowhere to stay and risked being arrested, I always wanted to shrink back and was averse to suffering and paying a price. I saw that I just wasn't considerate of God's intention and did not truly want to satisfy God. Noah's experience was quite motivating to me and also made me feel ashamed. I was no longer willing to pander to my flesh and decided to stay behind to support the newcomers. If no one would host me, I'd go sleep out in the fields. No matter what, I would persevere in preaching the gospel and watering the newcomers.

Later, Isa and I reached out to a newcomer named Nevin and asked if we could stay in a cabin on his field. Nevin and his parents all consented. I knew that God had opened up a way for us. After that, I summoned all the newcomers in the village together for a gathering and fellowshiped with them, "When God does His work to save people, Satan continually causes disturbances. God allows Satan's disturbance and persecution in order to perfect man's faith and love, and to reveal and eliminate people and test their faith. If we believers want to pursue the truth and life, we cannot shrink from suffering. Due to the persecution, we can't hold gatherings in our houses, so we've had to gather in the mountains. Despite the difficulty of these conditions, the suffering we've been going through has been meaningful. If we wait until after the satanic regime collapses and the

persecution ceases to believe in God, God's work will have already concluded and we will lose our chance at salvation. Why should we preach the gospel? Because these are the last days and this is the last stage in God's work of salvation of mankind. If we miss out this time, we will never be saved. In the future, the calamities will grow ever more grave and unbearable." We fellowshiped quite a bit at that time, and afterward some newcomers said, "We cannot protect ourselves from these calamities, and no one, not even the government, can save us. Only God can save us, so we must believe in God and attend gatherings." Some newcomers said, "We can't be afraid of being arrested or fined by the government, everything is in God's hands and we must continue gathering." After that, we fellowshiped on the truth of the incarnation and the work of judgment. After watering them for another ten days, they were all able to attend gatherings regularly.

After another ten days or so, the police ordered another night patrol. Nevin was afraid of being implicated and didn't want us to stay in his cabin any longer. I couldn't help but complain when faced with this situation. We had so many newcomers to water and support, there were so many difficulties in our work, and we didn't even have a place to stay. How was I supposed to do this work? I was quite unhappy and didn't feel like resolving the newcomers' issues. Later on, a sister sent a passage of God's words to me: **"Because when a person accepts what God entrusts to them, God has a standard for judging whether their actions are good or bad and whether the person has submitted, and whether the person has satisfied God's intentions and whether what they do is adequate. What God cares about is the person's heart, not their actions on the surface. It is not the case that God should bless someone as long as they do something, regardless of how they do it. This is a misunderstanding**

people have about God. God looks not just at the end result of things, but places more emphasis on how a person's heart is and how a person's attitude is during the development of things, and He looks at whether there is submission, consideration, and the desire to satisfy **God in their heart**" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). After reading God's words, I reflected on myself: When I first started supporting newcomers, I thought that I was doing my duty, that it should go smoothly, and that the newcomers would understand, host and protect me. When I encountered persecution, no one would host me, and several problems cropped up in our work, I just complained about what a difficult situation I was in, and how the newcomers were not eager for the truth. I felt the work was just too difficult and I wanted to go home. When it came to suffering and paying a price, I just didn't want to submit. I only considered the interests of my flesh and wasn't considerate of God's intention at all. Thinking of this, I felt so ashamed. Later on, a sister sent me this reminder: "Why weren't you able to submit when it came to suffering and paying a price? Why did you always only consider the interests of your flesh? What corrupt disposition caused this?" I continually pondered the sister's questions.

One day, I came across a passage of God's words: "**Now, can things befalling you that do not accord with your notions affect the performance of your duty? For example, sometimes the work becomes busy, and people are required to endure some hardship and pay a bit of a price to perform their duties well; some people then develop notions in their minds and resistance arises in them, and they may become negative and slack off in their work. Sometimes, the work is not busy, and people's duties become easier to perform, and some people then feel happy and think, 'It would be great if performing my duty was**

always this easy.’ What kind of people are they? They are lazy individuals who are greedy for the comforts of the flesh. Are such people loyal in performing their duties? (No.) Such people claim to be willing to submit to God, but their submission comes with conditions—things must fit with their own notions and not cause them to suffer any hardship in order for them to submit. If they might encounter adversity and need to endure hardship, they complain a lot and even rebel against and oppose God. What kind of people are they? They are people who do not love the truth. When God’s actions accord with their own notions and desires, and they don’t have to endure hardship or pay a price, they are able to submit. But if God’s work does not align with their notions or preferences, and it requires them to endure hardship and pay a price, they are not able to submit. Even if they don’t openly oppose it, in their hearts, they are resistant and annoyed. They perceive themselves as enduring great hardship and they harbor complaints in their hearts. What kind of problem is this? It shows that they do not love the truth” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Part Three). Through God’s words I learned that some people want things to just go smoothly in their duty. As soon as they encounter difficulties and they must suffer or pay a price, they are resistant and complain. Such people are lazy, covet the comforts of the flesh, are not loyal in their duty, do not consider God’s intention in the slightest, and do not love the truth. I realized I was just the same. I just wanted an easy duty and for work to proceed smoothly. I wasn’t willing to suffer or pay a price. When faced with persecution, when the newcomers dared not host us or gather for fear of being arrested and not only did my flesh suffer from not having a place to stay but I also had to pay a greater price to find newcomers and fellowship about God’s words and assist them, I complained about how difficult it was

to be under persecution, how timid the newcomers were and I just wanted to quit my duty and leave. As soon as I encountered difficulties I began thinking of the interests of my own flesh and lacked the slightest bit of loyalty and submission. God allowed this situation to happen and wanted me to seek the truth and learn lessons from this experience, but I didn't value life entry, always coveted the comforts of the flesh and viewed my duty in terms of my own preferences. I just wasn't someone that loved the truth.

There was another passage that had a deep impact on me. God says: **“Today, you do not believe the words I say, and you pay no attention to them; when the day comes for this work to spread and you see the entirety of it, you will regret, and at that time you will be dumbfounded. There are blessings, yet you do not know to enjoy them, and there is the truth, yet you do not pursue it. Do you not bring contempt upon yourself? Today, although the next step of God's work has yet to begin, there is nothing additional about the demands that are made of you and what you are asked to live out. There is so much work, and so many truths; are they not worthy of being known by you? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of awakening your spirit? Is God's chastisement and judgment incapable of making you hate yourself? Are you content to live under the influence of Satan, with peace and joy, and a little fleshly comfort? Are you not the lowliest of all people? None are more foolish than those who have beheld salvation but do not pursue to gain it; these are people who gorge themselves on the flesh and enjoy Satan. You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth.**

You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? ... I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Through God’s words I realized that God expresses His words, waters and supplies people and gives us a chance to do our duties with the hope that we will pursue and attain the truth in our duties, achieve dispositional transformation and be saved. This is God’s exaltation and grace. Lovers of the truth cherish such opportunities. In the course of their duties, they pursue and attain the truth. As for me, I didn’t love the truth and when I encountered difficulties in my duty, I would be resistant and complain about my situation. I felt it was all too tiring and difficult, wasn’t willing to suffer or pay a price and just wanted to shrink away. Given how lazy and unwilling to pursue the truth I was, even if I followed God to the very end, I’d never obtain the truth or achieve dispositional transformation

and would ultimately be eliminated and punished. I had to stop pandering to my flesh, I had to rebel against it and do my duty well. I realized that these newcomers were timid and afraid because they had only just entered the faith, hadn't yet rooted themselves on the true way and didn't understand the truth. If I didn't pay a price and undergo a little suffering to water and support them, these newcomers would likely be unable to stand strong on their own and I would be marked for a transgression. No matter whether or not we would have a host family and regardless of whether we would undergo suffering, I was willing to persevere in my duty and fulfill my responsibility. That day, Nevin's mother came out to me in the fields and told me, "The militiamen are starting their night patrols now, we're worried that you'll run into them since you're an outsider going in and out of the village." I fellowshiped with her saying, "When God was prepared to destroy Sodom, the Sodomites wanted to harm the two angels that God sent there. Lot survived because he hosted the two angels in his home. God is now doing the last stage of His work of mankind's salvation. These people that persecute believers are as evil as the Sodomites. It's normal to be worried, but we must have faith. Whether or not we will be found by the militiamen is in God's hands. We must pray to God more, He will protect His own work. If you do not host us and we must leave, we won't be able to water you. If you host us while we preach the gospel here, this is your good deed, and God will remember this." After my fellowship, she felt less afraid and was even quite happy. After that, she took good care of us and I was able to settle down and fellowship with newcomers and hold gatherings day and night. After understanding some truths, the newcomers invited their friends and family to listen to the gospel. In just two months, 120 villagers accepted God's work of the last days. I was so happy to see all these newcomers attending gatherings. Despite the fact that it was a tough

process and I suffered a bit, I felt at peace knowing I'd fulfilled my duty. Having witnessed God's guidance, I gained faith.

Later on, our supervisor assigned us to support newcomers in a different village. We first went to the house of a newcomer, Brother John. John had been relatively proactive in his duties and had been able to bring newcomers together for gatherings, but he later had stopped attending gatherings for fear of being arrested. We wanted to first support John and then go through him to support other newcomers, but John didn't want to talk to us. His wife said, "During a meeting in our village, they told us not to listen to sermons or believe in God. The militia conducts night patrols and will arrest anyone caught listening. They have forbidden us from listening to sermons, we're afraid of being arrested; and we're also quite busy and don't have time to listen." Having said that, she just started ignoring us. Seeing how this newcomer wouldn't even let us speak and avoided us, it seemed to me we were really up against it. Traveling to and from the village was a long and tiring journey, and so I stopped supporting newcomers and continued doing other work. After a while, my supervisor reminded me again that the newcomers would be busy during the day and I could go at night. I thought to myself, "They're avoiding us and don't want to listen; even if I go, I won't know what to do. It's a long journey to get there and will be even more difficult at night." So I didn't want to go. I then realized that I was shirking my responsibility to the newcomers by continually putting off going. I thought of God's words that expose how false leaders work, and then I found these words to read. God's words say: **"Say there is a job that could be completed in one month by one person. If it takes six months to do this job, do the expenditures of the remaining five months not constitute a loss? Let Me give an example about preaching the gospel. Say that a person is willing to investigate**

the true way and could probably be won over in just one month, after which they would enter the church and continue to receive watering and provision, and within six months they could establish a foundation. But if the attitude the person preaching the gospel takes toward this matter is one of disregard and perfunctoriness, and the leaders and workers also ignore their responsibilities, and it ends up taking half a year to win that person over, will this half a year not constitute a loss to their life? If they encounter the great disasters and they have not yet laid down a foundation on the true way, they will be in danger, and will those people not have failed them then? Such a loss cannot be measured with money or material things. Those people will have held up that person's understanding of the truth by half a year; they will have delayed them in establishing a foundation and in starting to do their duty by half a year. Who will take responsibility for this? Can the leaders and workers afford to take responsibility for this? No one can afford to bear the responsibility for holding up someone's life. Since no one can afford to bear this responsibility, what is appropriate for the leaders and workers to do? Four words: Give it your all. Give it your all to do what? To fulfill your own responsibilities, doing everything that you can see with your own eyes, think of in your mind, and achieve with your own caliber. This is giving it your all, this is being loyal and responsible, and this is the responsibility that leaders and workers should fulfill" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). Through God's words I learned that no matter what job one does, if it could have been done in a month, but it ended up taking six months to complete, this constitutes a very big loss. For instance, in the case of gospel preaching, if someone is willing to investigate the true way, they can be brought into the faith in a month and

make a timely entry into God's house if the gospel spreader fulfills their responsibility. This will allow them to understand the truth earlier and become rooted on the true way. If we do not pay a price in our duty, if we have a casual and perfunctory attitude and it takes six months to bring this person into the faith, this will be a great loss for their own life. If calamities happen, and these people haven't yet accepted God's work, and lack the watering and supply of the truth and die, no one can bear the responsibility for such deaths. Thus, this requires that we mustn't procrastinate in our duties and must do our utmost to fulfill our responsibilities so that we have a clear conscience. While supporting newcomers and preaching the gospel, I wasn't willing to pay a price and didn't want to suffer. When I was assigned to support newcomers and preach the gospel in that village, and faced difficulties and a long journey, I pandered to my flesh and wished not to go, procrastinating day after day. These newcomers were timid, scared and didn't dare attend gatherings due to government persecution; they direly needed watering and support to allow them to understand the truth and break free of their constraints. If God's work came to a close and these people hadn't broken free from the dark forces, and didn't gather and listen to God's words, then they wouldn't understand the truth, attain God's salvation and would be consumed in the calamities. What's more, there were many in that village that had yet to hear God's voice. If others pandered to their flesh as I did, giving up preaching the gospel in the face of difficulties, those people would not hear God's voice and receive God's salvation. I had to stop procrastinating and put aside my worries. No matter what situation arose, I had to go through it and fulfill my responsibilities.

Later on, I thought of another passage of God's words: **“As a created being, as one of those who follow God, regardless of age, gender, or how young or old one is, spreading the gospel is a mission and responsibility**

that everyone must accept. If this mission comes to you and requires you to expend yourself, pay a price, or even lay down your life, what should you do? You should be duty-bound to accept it. This is the truth, it's what you should understand. This is not a simple doctrine—it is the truth. Why do I say it's the truth? Because no matter how times change, how the decades go by, or how places and spaces change, spreading the gospel and bearing testimony to God will always be a positive thing. Its meaning and value will never change: It absolutely won't be influenced by changes in time or geographical location. Spreading the gospel and bearing testimony to God is eternal, and as a created being, you should accept and practice it. This is the eternal truth" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). God's words touched me deeply. It was with God's grace that I was able to hear His voice. Preaching the gospel and watering newcomers was my duty and I had to see this work to completion. When I needed to suffer and pay a price, I should accept it unconditionally. No matter what difficulties or situations I faced, I had to submit and fulfill my duty. Having realized this, I went by myself to the village. It was dusk when I set off and had started to rain. As I walked along the road I prayed to God. Later, I came across an old lady while walking. I told her I was going to her village and so we walked one behind the other. After I got to the village I didn't see the old lady again. It was dark. I wasn't familiar with the roads there and didn't know where to go, so I just sat by the side of the road. I was feeling quite anxious, worried that I wouldn't know what to say if I ran into a night patroller, so I continually called out to God in my heart. Just then, a woman came back from working in the fields and, seeing me sitting all alone, asked me, "What are you doing sitting there? You can come home with me." I followed her back to her house, and when I preached the gospel to her, she

accepted it. Later on, she brought others to listen along. When people heard that I was preaching the gospel, some sought me out personally and had me come to their house to preach the gospel. I bore witness to Almighty God's last days' work and they really enjoyed hearing about it. Some said, "Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus, They are one God. We should continue listening to Almighty God's words." Others said, "Even if the government persecutes us, we will continue listening." Some of the newcomers were quite enthusiastic in gatherings, they'd come morning and night, and really thirsted and desired to gather and listen to sermons. I was quite surprised. In the past, I had always pandered to my flesh and was unwilling to suffer and pay a price, but when I rectified my state and became willing to cooperate, I saw that what God did was beyond our imagining. Our ability to spread the gospel in this village through that woman was a sign of God going about His work. It allowed me to see God's authority and hardened my resolve to continue preaching the gospel. After around a month, we had preached the gospel throughout the village. Newcomers that were previously afraid of being arrested had mostly all started gathering again. Over 80 villagers were gathering normally and we were able to start a church. Thank God!

Through this experience, I learned that one's attitude in one's duty is very important. When we submitted and considered God's intention, we saw that no matter how hard our work was, as long as we cooperated sincerely, God's guidance became apparent. Despite revealing corruption, being negative and weak and wanting to quit, through the guidance and supply of God's words, I didn't give up on preaching the gospel and didn't leave behind regret. This was all with God's protection. Through this experience I gained faith and made progress in life. Thank God!

83. I Can Finally Discern Evil People

By An Xun, China

In March of 2020, I received a letter from my mother. I found out that she had been cleared out as an evil person from the church over a year ago. This sudden message shook me like a bolt from the blue. I couldn't even finish reading the letter before the tears started falling from my eyes. God's salvation work in the last days is a once-in-a-lifetime chance! Since my mother had been cleared out of the church, hasn't she lost her hope of being saved? At that moment, all that flashed through my mind was how good my mother had been to me: Ever since I was a child, my mother had guided me in reading God's word and taught me to pray. My father had wanted me to study well and get ahead in the future, but it was my mother who insisted on me believing in God and doing a duty, which allowed me to walk the right path in life. Later, my mother was hunted by the police for spreading the gospel and had to go on the run. Every time she wrote to me, she encouraged me to sincerely do my duty and pursue the truth.... These memories kept replaying in my head like scenes from a movie. My mother had believed in God for sixteen years, and even though she was arrested twice, she didn't betray God and kept doing her duties away from home, making me believe she truly believed in God. So how could she be cleared out? Had the leader made a mistake? Couldn't she have another chance to repent, given all her years of sacrifice and expenditure? She said in her letter that she had been perfunctory and running amok in her duties, and that she had been sowing dissent and forming cliques among the brothers and sisters, bringing losses upon the work of the church, and that each time she had been pruned, she had not reflected on or recognized herself, and always thought the problem lay with someone else. She said that she had

committed too many evils, and that her being cleared out was justified, that she hadn't borne any testimony in over a decade of faith, and instead, had committed many evils and harmed the work of the church. She said that she was an old devil, a lackey of Satan, and an evil demon, that her being alive was a mark of shame, and that she was in such pain that she wanted to kill herself. I then thought about how even after my mother had been cleared out, she still sent me the money she had earned from work to support me in my duties. My mother's behavior confused me: Was it just that her corrupt disposition was too serious, rather than there being something wrong with her essence? If she had another chance, would she be able to repent and avoid being cleared out? God saves people to the greatest extent possible, and God's house allows for those who have been cleared out to return if they are truly repentant. Seeing as my mother had shown some good behaviors after being cleared out, perhaps the church could give her another chance? So I wrote a letter to help her, asking her to sincerely repent, and that if she truly repented, she may be accepted back into the church.

During a gathering, I mentioned my thoughts and a sister told me that I lacked discernment of my mother's essence, which was why I always wanted her to be accepted back into the church, and she told me that I needed to seek the truth on this matter. I realized that God was using this sister to remind me to learn a lesson, so I prayed to God, "Oh God, I am confused about my mother being cleared out, please enlighten me to understand the truth and allow me to learn to discern my mother's nature essence and escape the bonds of feelings."

One day, I read two passages of God's words: **"Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because**

now is a different era of God's work, these people are restricted, for they are decidedly to be eliminated. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devils and Satans. Their behavior disrupts and disturbs God's work, it disturbs the brothers' and sisters' life entry, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep's clothing must be cleansed away; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). "People who genuinely believe in God are those who are willing to put God's word into practice and are willing to practice the truth. People who are truly able to stand firm in their testimony to God are also those who are willing to put His word into practice and can genuinely stand on the side of the truth. People who resort to trickery and injustice all lack the truth, and they all bring shame to God. Those who cause disputes in the church are Satan's lackeys, they are the embodiment of Satan. Such people are so malicious. Those who have no discernment and are incapable of standing on the side of the truth all harbor evil intentions and tarnish the truth. More than that, they are the archetypal representatives of Satan. They are beyond redemption, and shall naturally be eliminated. God's family does not allow those who do not practice the truth to remain, nor does it allow to remain those who deliberately dismantle the church. However, now is not the

time to do the work of expulsion; such people will simply be exposed and eliminated in the end. No more useless work is to be expended on these people; those who belong to Satan cannot stand on the side of the truth, whereas those who seek the truth can” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). God’s words of exposure made me understand that only those who can accept and practice the truth truly believe in God, and that those who refuse to accept the truth, consistently commit evils and disturb church work, and never repent, are authentic devils and Satans. They are the ones that God will reveal and eliminate, and the church is to clear them out. This is an administrative decree of the church. From my brothers and sisters, I learned that my mother had been consistently unrepentant in her evil deeds. She had exploited the corruption one sister had revealed to attack and judge her, and she had drawn others in to judge and exclude this sister along with her, causing this sister’s state to deteriorate. My mother hadn’t gotten any results in her duties, and when her team leader pressed her on her progress, she went behind their back and judged them to be unloving. A supervisor fellowshiped and exposed her problems, but she said that they were suppressing her and wouldn’t let her speak. She also voiced her dissatisfaction with the supervisor behind their back, causing others to develop biases against them, causing serious disruptions and disturbances to the work. The leader dissected her actions and conduct, warned her, and arranged for her to reflect in isolation. But my mother didn’t reflect, and instead went to various gatherings as she pleased, sowing discord between the brothers, sisters, and leaders. These facts left me stunned. My mother had such a vicious nature! If anyone did anything even slightly out of line with her wishes, she’d develop a grudge, go behind their back and judge them, sow discontent, and spread discord among the brothers and sisters,

disrupting the work of the church. The others had warned her again and again, but she'd been completely unrepentant, consistently committed evil, and disturbed the church's work and the brothers' and sisters' life entry. This wasn't a normal revelation of corruption, nor was it a problem of a serious corrupt disposition as I had thought, rather, she had a vicious nature, and her essence as an evil person had been revealed. She wouldn't repent even if given another chance. The church had cleared her out according to principles to protect the church's work and the brothers and sisters from further disturbance. Handling things in this way was completely just and in line with the truth principles. I always thought with sixteen years of faith, many years out doing duties, her continued belief even after being arrested twice, her forsaking of family and career, and all her effort and expenditure, she was a true believer. But now I saw clearly that my mother only believed in God to sneak into the church and gain blessings, and that she wanted to exchange her ostensible forsaking and sacrifices for the blessings of heaven. Almighty God has expressed so many truths, but she didn't accept or practice a single one. Instead, she committed evil and caused disturbances in the church, and stubbornly refused to repent. This is an evil person. How is this any different from the Pharisees, who refused to accept the truths expressed by the Lord Jesus, and who nailed the Lord Jesus to the cross, despite traveling the world to convert people? I recalled something the Lord Jesus said: **“Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that follows the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity”** (Matthew 7:21–23). God's words made me understand, that a person can make

outward sacrifices and efforts, but this doesn't mean they are true believers, and God does not recognize this kind of faith. Only those who accept and practice the truth are true believers. Such people have a hope of casting off their corrupt dispositions, attaining God's salvation, and entering God's kingdom. I also wondered whether my mother's recognition of her evil deeds and herself as a devil and a Satan after her being cleared out constituted true repentance and whether this was enough for the church to allow her back in.

In my seeking, I read these words of God: **“Regardless of how angry God had been with the Ninevites, as soon as they declared a fast and donned sackcloth and ashes, His heart began to soften and He began to change His mind. When He proclaimed to them that He would destroy their city—the moment prior to their confession and repentance for their sins—God was still angry with them. Once they had carried out a series of repentant acts, God’s anger for the people of Nineveh gradually transformed into mercy and tolerance for them. There is nothing contradictory about the coinciding revelation of these two aspects of God’s disposition in the same event. So, how should one understand and know this lack of contradiction? God expressed and revealed each of these two polar-opposite essences before and after the people of Nineveh repented, allowing people to see the realness and the unoffendableness of God’s essence. God used His attitude to tell people the following: It is not that God does not tolerate people, or that He does not want to show mercy to them; rather, it is that they rarely truly repent to God, and it is rare that people truly turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. In other words, when God is angry with man, He hopes that man will be able to truly repent, and indeed He hopes to see man’s true repentance, in which case He**

will then liberally continue to bestow His mercy and tolerance upon man. This is to say that man's evil conduct incurs God's wrath, whereas God's mercy and tolerance are bestowed upon those who listen to God and truly repent before Him, upon those who can turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands. God's attitude was very clearly revealed in His treatment of the Ninevites: God's mercy and tolerance are not at all difficult to obtain, and what He requires is one's true repentance. As long as people turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands, God will change His heart and His attitude toward them" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). **"When you see how devils and Satans in the world defy God, you are seeing how devils and Satan in the spiritual realm defy God—there is no difference at all. They come from the same source and possess the same nature essence, and that's why they do the same things. Regardless of what form they take, they all do the same things. ... If they attack God and blaspheme against God, then they are devils, and not humans. In human skin, however good-sounding or correct the things they say are, their nature essence is that of devils. Devils can say things that sound good to mislead people, yet they don't accept the truth at all, much less do they put it into practice—this is absolutely the case. Look at those evil people and antichrists and at those who defy and betray God—are they not this type of person? ... Tell Me, is it appropriate to allow these people who are of devils, or these people with the nature essence of devils, to remain in God's house? (No, it isn't.) No, it isn't. They're not the same as God's chosen people: God's chosen people belong to God, whereas these people belong to the devils and Satan"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). Thinking on God's words made me understand about the

people of Nineveh, who due to their evil deeds, aroused God's anger and faced destruction. But because they could **"turn away from their evil ways and abandon the violence in their hands,"** and because they truly repented, they were able to receive God's mercy and forgiveness. Only when you truly reflect on, recognize, regret, and hate the evil path you were once walking, and once you are able to listen to God's word and start anew, and stop walking the evil path you were on, are you able to gain God's mercy and forgiveness. Just saying words that sound good without accepting or practicing the truth does not constitute true repentance, and God will show no mercy or forgiveness toward such people. I looked into my mother's behavior and found that she still had no recognition of all the serious evils she had committed. Instead, she shifted the blame onto others, saying that back then a sister had despised the supervisor, often picked on their faults and gossiped about their flaws, and that because she herself had no discernment, she sided with this sister in doing evil. My mother still had no understanding at all of all the evil she had done or her insidious and malicious satanic nature, and she felt no real regret or hatred toward these things, so how could she truly repent? If she were to be accepted back, she would just keep doing evil and disturbing church work as before. Also, though she recognized herself as an old devil, a lackey of Satan, and an evil demon, on the matters of the exact evils she had done, why she had done them, what intentions were controlling her, which satanic poisons she was following, and what satanic disposition was involved, she had no real reflection or understanding. I thought back on all the correct things my mother told me growing up, like how precious God's salvation work in the last days is, and that sincerely doing a duty and pursuing the truth is the right path in life but though she'd been saying these things for over a decade, she hadn't accepted or practiced any truth. She verbally

acknowledged her evil deeds and was able to say correct things, but this didn't mean that she had truly repented. The church allows for those who have shown true repentance to return, but not people like my mother, who only made verbal acknowledgments and didn't truly change.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"Regardless of whether you are an antichrist or an evil person, or whether you have been cleared out or expelled, fulfilling your responsibilities as a person is something you ought to do. Why do I say that it's something you ought to do? You have received such a great supply of truths from God, and this is also God's painstaking efforts. God's house has watered you and provided for you for so many years, but does God demand anything from you? No. All the various books distributed by God's house are free, no one has to spend a single penny. Likewise, the true way of eternal life and the words of life that God bestows upon people are free, and the sermons and fellowships of God's house are all free for people to listen to. Therefore, whether you are an ordinary person or a member of a special group, you have received so many truths from God for free, that surely it's only right you should preach God's words and God's gospel to people and bring people into the presence of God, is it not? God has bestowed all truths unto humankind; who can afford to repay such great love? God's grace, God's words, and God's life are priceless, and no human being can afford to repay them! Is the life of man that precious? Can it be worth as much as the truth? Therefore, no one can afford to repay God's love and grace, and that includes those who have been cleared out, expelled, and eliminated by the church—they are no exception. As long as you have some conscience, reason, and humanity, then no matter how God's house treats you, you should fulfill your obligation to spread God's words and bear witness to**

His work. This is people's unshirkable responsibility. Therefore, no matter how many people you preach God's words and spread the gospel to, or how many people you gain, this is nothing to compliment you on. God has expressed so many truths and yet you don't listen to them or accept them. Surely rendering a little service and preaching the gospel to others is what you ought to be doing, isn't it? Given that you have come this far today, shouldn't you repent? Shouldn't you look for opportunities to repay God's love? You really should! God's house has administrative decrees, and clearing people out, expelling them, and eliminating them are things that are done according to the administrative decrees and according to God's requirements—doing these things is correct. Some people may say, 'It's somewhat embarrassing to accept into the church people gained by the gospel preaching of those who have been cleared out or expelled.' In actual fact, this is the duty that people should do, and there is nothing to be embarrassed about. People are all created beings. Even if you have been cleared out or expelled, condemned as an evil person or an antichrist, or you are a target for being eliminated, are you not still a created being? Once you are cleared out, isn't God still your God? Are the words God has spoken to you and the things God has provided you with erased in one fell swoop? Do they stop existing? They do still exist, it's just that you haven't cherished them. All converted people, no matter who converted them, are created beings and should submit themselves before the Creator. Therefore, if these people who have been cleared out or expelled are willing to preach the gospel, we will not restrict them; but no matter how they preach, the principles of God's house for using people and the administrative decrees of God's house are inalterable, and this will never, ever change'' (The Word, Vol. 5. The

Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (6)). God's words made me understand that God has expressed so many words and has always been doing the work of saving people. This salvation is given to us for free, and it is only natural that we do our duties. Though my mother had been cleared out, she was still a created being, and relied on God every day for food, water, and air to live. God had not stripped her of her right to eat and drink His word. She had been willing to spread the gospel and gave me money to support me in my duties, which was just fulfilling some of her responsibilities, but she hadn't truly repented, and in considering principles, she was not suited to return. I used to be muddleheaded, didn't seek the truth, and had no understanding of God's disposition. I saw that my mother had some good conduct and that she was able to say some correct things, so I always hoped that the church would be able to take her back. I was so muddleheaded! I also asked myself, if somebody else were to have been cleared out, would I have hoped for them to be accepted back? I wouldn't. Why had I been hoping for my mother to be given another chance and accepted back after she had been cleared out? What was the root of this problem? I read a passage of God's words: **"The final part of God's words lays bare mankind's greatest weakness—they all live in a state of feelings—and so God does not avoid a single one of them, and exposes the secrets hidden in the hearts of all mankind. Why is it so hard for people to separate themselves from their feelings? Does doing so surpass the standards of conscience? Can conscience fulfill God's will? Can feelings help people through adversity? In God's eyes, feelings are His enemy—has this not been clearly stated in God's words?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 28). God exposes that feelings are His enemy, that they are humans' greatest weakness, that living in feelings will prevent you from

viewing things and people with principles, and that living this way will make you prone to disrupting and disturbing the work of the church. Before, I was unaware of how strong my feelings were. In the last few years, people around me had been revealed as evil people and antichrists, and I was able to evaluate and expose their problems truthfully. Because of this, I felt I still had a sense of justice, but my mother being cleared out revealed me completely. My mother had committed so many evils, and yet I didn't hate her. On the contrary, I felt sad and wept whenever I thought of her being cleared out, and I felt a deep pain at her losing her chance at salvation, to the point of doubting if the leaders and workers had made a mistake in clearing her out, and I felt wronged on her behalf. Seeing my mother showing some good behaviors and no outward stubbornness or resistance to being cleared out, I always hoped that the church would take her back. Though I didn't plea for leniency on her behalf, in my thinking I was standing in opposition to God. If not for the judgment and exposure of God's words and the revelation of facts which allowed me to see her essence clearly, I really would have pled for leniency on her behalf, and I would have stood on the side of an evil person and resisted God. On reflection, I finally recognized that these satanic poisons like "Blood is thicker than water," and "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from feelings?" had been rooted deep within my heart, making me live by feelings and unable to tell good from evil. No matter what evil my mother had done, I still thought she was a good person, and the person closest to me. I felt that I'd be indebted to her and unable to live with myself if I didn't take her side. Thinking on it now, from a young age, my mother had read God's word with me, taught me to pray, urged me to sincerely do my duty and pursue the truth, and sent me money to support me in doing my duty away from home. These and other such things were just her fulfilling

her responsibilities as a mother, and this was also God's sovereignty and arrangement. I thought about all the years I believed in God in a citadel of demons ruled by the CCP. I faced danger so many times, but it was God who watched over and saw me through difficulties. Also, my brothers and sisters with whom I share no blood ties risked themselves to protect me when I was in danger of being arrested. I was arrested twice while doing my duty and acquired a criminal record, but it was my brothers and sisters who took me in and cared for me as if I were their own blood. This was all because of God's love, so I should thank God and repay His love! My mother is an evil person, has already disturbed the church's work so much, and she still hasn't truly repented, even after being cleared out. Without discerning her, I still wanted the church to give her another chance and take her back. I had absolutely no consideration for the interests of God's house or for the life entry of the brothers or sisters. Was I not just being an accomplice to an evil person and resisting and opposing God? I was being conscientious and loving toward an evil person, which is disloyal to God, cruel to brothers and sisters, and devoid of humanity. I saw that I was living by satanic poisons, and that I was a fool lacking in discernment and the ability to tell good from evil. I almost stood on the side of Satan and opposed God. I was in such grave danger! Realizing these things, I finally understood first-hand what God meant in **"feelings are His enemy."** These words are so practical and true! Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"You must cast aside your feelings as soon as you can; I do not act out of feelings, but exercise righteousness instead. If your parents do anything that is of no benefit to the church, they cannot escape"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 9). It is precisely because God upholds righteousness instead of acting on feelings and the truth and righteousness reign in the house of God, that

those antichrists and evil people who unrepentantly disturb and tear down God's work and harm brothers and sisters can be cleared out, that all the church work can proceed smoothly, and that brothers and sisters can have a normal church life and environment in which to do duties. God demands that we avoid relying on feelings in our speech and actions, and that we rely on principles instead. This is also how we should treat our parents, and this is the truth I should put into practice. Though my mother physically birthed me, she is an evil person in essence, an enemy of God, and she is hated by God. I must be principled in this matter, stand by God, and not rely on feelings to speak on her behalf.

Later, I read another passage of God's words that allowed me to understand how I should treat my mother. God says: **"Suppose your parents hinder your belief in God, their nature essence is that of disbelievers and nonbelievers, or even of evil people and devils, and they are not on the same path as you. In other words, they are not the same kind of person as you at all, and though you lived in the same household as them for many years, they simply do not have the same pursuits or character as you do, and they certainly do not have the same preferences or aspirations as you. You believe in God, and they do not believe in God at all, and they even resist God. What should be done in these circumstances? (Reject them.) God has not told you to reject them or curse them in these circumstances. God did not say that. God's requirement of 'honoring one's parents' still stands. This means that while you are living with your parents, you should still uphold this requirement of honoring your parents. There is no contradiction in this matter, is there? (No.) There is no contradiction in this at all. In other words, when you do manage to return home for a visit, you can cook them a meal or make them some dumplings, and if possible, you can**

buy them some health products, and they will be very satisfied with you. ... There must be principles to how you treat all people, including your parents; regardless of whether they believe in God or not, and regardless of whether or not they are evil people, you must treat them with principles. God has told man this principle: It is about treating others fairly—it is just that people have an extra degree of responsibility toward their parents. All you need to do is fulfill this responsibility. Regardless of whether your parents are believers or not, regardless of whether they pursue their belief or not, regardless of whether their outlook on life and their humanity line up with yours or not, you just need to fulfill your responsibility to them. You do not need to avoid them—just let everything take its natural course, according to God's orchestrations and arrangements. If they hinder your belief in God, then you should still fulfill your filial responsibilities to the best of your ability, so that your conscience at least does not feel indebted to them. If they do not hinder you, and they support your belief in God, then you should also practice according to the principles, treating them well when it is fitting to do so” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (4)). God's words brightened my heart and made me understand the principles to treat family members. My mother is an evil person in essence, and we are on different paths. I shouldn't act by relying on feelings, but rather, principles. However, she did raise me, shared the gospel with me, and to this day, supports me in my faith, and so long as it doesn't interfere with my duties, I can still care for her and fulfill my responsibilities as her child.

The matter of my mother being cleared out revealed just how blinded and overly sentimental I was. It was God's words that guided me to discern my mother's essence as an evil person and allowed me to know what stance

I should take. It also made the dangers and consequences of being too sentimental totally clear to me, preventing me from doing anything disruptive. I thank Almighty God from the bottom of my heart!

84. I Emerged From Anxiety About My Illness

By Xiaoxi, China

In June 2022, several nearby churches were raided by the Chinese Communist Party. Almost all the leaders, workers, and text-based workers were arrested, and because there were no suitable personnel for the text-based work, I was transferred in. Less than a month later, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. I contracted the disease, and had intermittent fevers, frequent chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Medication and shots alleviated these symptoms a lot, but painful lumps appeared in my armpits and on the inner sides of my arms, fluid accumulated in my thighs, and my legs and hips were extremely sore. My feet also developed mild ulcers and oozed fluid. I had had cervical cancer before, and when these symptoms appeared, I became very anxious, especially because my mother had also died of cancer, and in the six months before her death, her feet had ulcerated and oozed fluid. On top of that, the cancerous area would occasionally hurt, and I became even more worried, thinking, “My cancer was already in the mid-to-late stages. Are these symptoms a sign that the cancer has spread? If that’s the case, I don’t have much time left.... I’ve believed in God for so many years, but my corrupt disposition hasn’t changed much. If I die, won’t I lose my chance to be saved?” I also thought of the agony some cancer patients go through before death, and I became very worried, fearing that I would suffer like them and becoming even more afraid of dying. Later, I went to the hospital for a check-up. The doctor said my symptoms were related to my COVID-19 infection, and that my kidneys were weak. They advised me to rest more and avoid staying up late. I thought, “I’m at the computer every day doing my duty from morning to night. If my condition worsens and I collapse, won’t I be unable to do my

duty? Won't that delay my life entry? Would I still be able to achieve salvation?" After that, I would lie down to rest as soon as I felt uncomfortable. Because I focused on taking care of my body and not on my duty, my work was delayed. Later, with treatment, my condition began to improve, but I was still worried, thinking, "Text-based work requires mental effort, and sitting at the computer every day consumes energy. Won't this be detrimental to my recovery in the long run? Why don't I ask the leader to assign me a lighter duty so I can maintain my body while still doing my duty as best I can?" At that time, these thoughts kept coming to my mind, but then I thought, "I was transferred here because there were no suitable people for the text-based work, and if I resign, won't that affect the text-based work? If I only think about myself and not the church's work, aren't I being unconscionable?" So, I dismissed the idea of resigning. After that, although I appeared to continue doing my duty, I was still constantly worried, fearing that if my condition worsened and I suddenly died, I would no longer experience God's work, and lose my chance to achieve salvation. With these thoughts in mind, I couldn't focus on my duty. Sometimes I even hoped, "It would be great if God could take away this illness!"

One day during my devotionals, I read God's words: **"If illness befalls you, and no matter how much doctrine you understand you're still unable to overcome it, your heart will still become distressed, anxious, and worried, and not only will you be unable to face the matter calmly, but your heart will also be filled with complaints. You will be constantly wondering, 'Why isn't anyone else sick with this disease? Why make me get this disease? How did this happen to me? It's because I'm unlucky and I have a bad fate. I've never offended anyone, nor have I committed any sin, so why has this happened to me? God is treating me so unfairly!' You see, besides distress, anxiety, and worry, you fall into**

depression as well, with one negative emotion following another and without any way to escape them no matter how much you might want to. Because it is a real illness, it is not easily taken from you or cured, so what should you do? You want to submit but you can't, and if you submit one day, the next day your condition worsens and it hurts so much, and then you don't want to submit anymore, and you start complaining again. You go back and forth like this all the time, so what should you do? Let Me tell you the secret of success. Whether you encounter a major illness or a minor one, the moment your illness gets serious or you're facing death, just remember one thing: Do not fear death. Even if you're in the final stages of cancer, even if the death rate for your particular illness is very high, do not fear death. Regardless of how great your suffering is, if you fear death then you will not submit. ... What is the right attitude you should adopt to not fear death? If your illness gets so serious that you may die, and the death rate for it is high regardless of how old the person is who contracts the illness, and the time from when people contract the illness to when they die is very short, what should you think in your heart? 'I must not fear death, everyone dies in the end. Submitting to God, however, is something most people can't do, and I can use this illness to practice submitting to God. I should have the thinking and the attitude of submitting to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and I must not fear death.' Dying is easy, much easier than living. You can be in extreme pain and you won't be aware of it, and as soon as your eyes close, your breath ceases, your soul leaves the body, and your life ends. This is how death goes; it is this simple. Not fearing death is one attitude to adopt. Besides this, you mustn't worry about whether your illness will get worse or not, or whether you will die if you cannot be cured, or how long it will be until

you die, or what pain you will be in when it comes time to die. You mustn't worry about these things; these are not things you should be worrying about. This is because the day must come, and it must come in some year, some month, and on some particular day. You cannot hide from it and you cannot escape it—it is your fate. Your so-called fate has been predestined by God and already arranged by Him. The span of your years and the age and time at which you die are already set by God, so what are you worried about? You can worry about it but that won't change anything; you can worry about it, but you cannot prevent it from happening; you can worry about it, but you cannot stop that day from arriving. Therefore, your worry is superfluous, and all it does is make the burden of your illness even heavier” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). After reading God's words, I understood that no matter what illness befalls us—whether it worsens or threatens our life—we shouldn't fear death, or the suffering that may come with dying. These are not things that we should worry about, because according to God's ordination, everyone must die. However, the time and manner of each person's death have already been predetermined by God. No one can avoid or escape this. The truth we should enter into in the face of suffering and death is to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. But I didn't have a true understanding of God's sovereignty and arrangements and I always wanted to escape this situation. Since my cancer was already in the mid-to-late stages, and my body was showing some bad symptoms, I was worried that my condition would worsen and I would suddenly die, so I kept wanting to switch to an easier duty. In fact, whether the duty is tiring or easy, and whether it drains one's energy or not, it doesn't determine one's life or death. All this is determined by God's ordination and arrangements. For example, I know some people who

seemed strong and healthy, without any illness, and who worked in easy, non-exhausting jobs, but they passed away at a young age. Some people, though weak and sickly, living in harsh conditions, live to be eighty or ninety years old. This shows that a person's life and death are not related to these objective conditions. When a person reaches the lifespan ordained by God, they will inevitably die. No amount of human care can extend one's lifespan by even a moment. Especially when I saw God's words saying: **"Dying is easy, much easier than living. You can be in extreme pain and you won't be aware of it, and as soon as your eyes close, your breath ceases, your soul leaves the body, and your life ends. This is how death goes; it is this simple. Not fearing death is one attitude to adopt,"** my mind suddenly became clear. I didn't need to worry about whether my body could withstand dying. Death is not as terrifying as I thought. Since God had ordained that I would go through this kind of situation, I had to submit amidst the illness and do my best to shoulder my duty. If one day my illness worsened and death truly came, I would face it calmly and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements.

I read two more passages of God's words and gained some understanding of His good intentions. Almighty God says: **"When God arranges for someone to get an illness, whether major or minor, His purpose in doing so is not to make you appreciate the ins and outs of being sick, the harm the illness does to you, the hardships and difficulties the illness causes you, and all the myriad feelings the illness causes you to feel—His purpose is not for you to appreciate sickness through being sick. Rather, His purpose is for you to learn the lessons from sickness, to learn how to feel for God's intentions, to know the corrupt dispositions you reveal and the wrong attitudes you adopt toward God when you're sick, and to learn how to submit to God's**

sovereignty and arrangements, so that you can achieve true submission to God and be able to stand firm in your testimony—this is absolutely key. God wishes to save you and cleanse you through sickness. What about you does He wish to cleanse? He wishes to cleanse all your extravagant desires and demands toward God, and even cleanse the various plans, judgments, and schemes you make at all costs to survive and live. God does not ask you to make plans, He does not ask you to judge, and He does not allow you to have any extravagant desires toward Him; He requires only that you submit to Him and, in your practice and experience of submitting, to know your own attitude toward sickness, and to know your attitude toward these bodily conditions He gives to you, as well as your own personal wishes. When you come to know these things, you can then appreciate how beneficial it is for you that God has arranged the circumstances of the illness for you or that He has given you these bodily conditions; and you can appreciate just how helpful they are to changing your disposition, to you attaining salvation, and to your life entry. That is why, when illness comes calling, you must not always be wondering how you can escape it or flee from it or reject it” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). “No matter what trial befalls you, you must treat it as a burden given to you by God. Say some people are beset by great sickness and unbearable suffering, some even face death. How should they approach this kind of situation? In many cases, the trials of God are burdens He gives to people. However great the burden bestowed upon you by God, that is the weight of burden you should undertake, for God understands you, and knows you will be able to bear it. The burden given to you by God will not exceed your stature or the limits of your endurance, so there is no question that you will be able to bear it.

No matter what manner of burden God gives you, what kind of trial, remember one thing: Whether or not you understand God's intentions and whether or not you are enlightened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit after you pray, whether or not this trial is God disciplining you or warning you, it does not matter if you do not understand. As long as you do not delay in performing your duty and can loyally hold fast to your duty, God will be satisfied, and you will stand firm in your testimony" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Frequent Reading of God's Words and Contemplation of the Truth Is There a Way Ahead). After reading God's words, I understood that the purpose of illness, in God's intention, is to purify and transform people, which is beneficial to one's life. God hopes that people will be able to submit, reflect on their own corruption and rebellion, seek truth to resolve it, and also do their duty with loyalty amidst illness. This is what people should do. Reflecting on myself, I realized that I had no submission amidst my illness, nor did I learn any lessons from it, but that I always wanted to avoid the situation, thinking that text-based work consumes too much energy, and worrying that if the illness worsens and I die, I would miss my chance for salvation, and so I always contemplated switching to an easier duty. A person with conscience and reason would still be loyal in doing their duty even when sick, especially when the church work needs them most. However, I showed resistance and avoidance in the face of illness. I lacked any loyalty and submission to God, and only considered my own interests. Reflecting on this, I wanted to repent. Regardless of the illness or how severe it became, so long as I was still breathing, I would submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, fully experience this environment and do my best to perform my duty. I dispelled the thought of transferring to a different duty, and started to put my heart into the performance of my duty. Sometimes, when my body felt

uncomfortable and I really couldn't endure it, I lay down and rested for a while, and when I felt better, I carried on with my duty. During this period, besides taking traditional Chinese medicine for treatment, I also did appropriate physical therapy to alleviate the pain. Four months passed, and there was still pain at the site of the illness, but the other uncomfortable symptoms had decreased significantly, and my mental state was quite good.

Later, I continued to seek the reasons why I had been unable to submit during the illness. During a devotional one day, I read two passages of God's words that gave me some understanding of my issues. Almighty God says: **"What is the outcome when people only consider their own prospects, fates, and interests? It is not easy for them to submit to God, and even when they wish to, they can't. People who particularly value their own prospects, fates, and interests, always scrutinize whether God's work is beneficial to their prospects, to their fates, and to them obtaining blessings. In the end, what is the outcome of their scrutiny? All they do is rebel against and oppose God. Even when they do insist on performing their duties, they do so perfunctorily, with a mood of negativity; in their hearts, they keep thinking about how to take advantage, and to not be on the losing side. Such are their motives when they perform their duties, and in this, they are trying to make a deal with God. ... They never think of the work of the church, nor of the interests of God's house, they always plot for their own sakes, they always plan for their own interests, pride, and status, and not only do they perform their duties poorly, they also delay and affect the work of the church. Is this not going astray and neglecting their duties? If someone is always planning for their own interests and prospects when they perform their duty, and gives no thought to the work of the church or the interests of God's house, then this is not performing a duty. This**

is opportunism, it is doing things for their own benefit and to obtain blessings for themselves. In this way, the nature behind performing their duty changes. It is just about making a deal with God, and wanting to use the performance of their duty to achieve their own goals. This way of doing things is very likely to disrupt the work of God's house. If it only causes minor losses to the church's work, then there is still room for redemption and they may still be given an opportunity to perform their duty, rather than being cleared out; but if it causes great losses to the church's work and incurs the wrath of God and people alike, then they will be revealed and eliminated, with no further opportunity to perform their duty. Some people are dismissed and eliminated in this way. Why are they eliminated? Have you found the root cause? The root cause is that they always consider their own gains and losses, get carried away by their own interests, are unable to rebel against the flesh, and don't have a submissive attitude toward God at all, so they tend to behave recklessly. They believe in God only to obtain profit, grace, and blessings, and not at all to gain the truth, so their belief in God fails. This is the root of the problem. Do you think it is unjust for them to be revealed and eliminated? It is not unjust in the slightest, it is entirely determined by their nature. Anyone who does not love the truth or pursue the truth will eventually be revealed and eliminated" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One's Duty Well). **"It is no accident that antichrists are able to do their duty—they absolutely do their duty with their own intentions and purposes and the desire to gain blessings. Whatever duty they do, their purpose and attitude are of course inseparable from gaining blessings, the good destination and the good prospects and destiny which they think about and are concerned with day and night.**

They are like businesspeople who don't talk about anything besides their work. Whatever antichrists do is all linked to fame, gain, and status—it is all linked to gaining blessings and prospects and destiny. Deep down, their hearts are full of such things; this is the nature essence of antichrists. It is precisely because of this kind of nature essence that others are able to clearly see that their ultimate end is to be eliminated” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). God exposes that antichrists do their duties not to experience God's work and gain truth, but to use the opportunity to do their duties to pursue their own interests and demand the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. Because the intentions of antichrists in doing their duties are wrong, when they encounter environments that they believe are detrimental to their prospects and destination, it is difficult for them to submit. Even if they appear to do their duties, they are just going through the motions, causing losses to the church's work, and creating obstacles and disruptions. In addition, they consistently lack a repentant heart, and are eventually revealed and eliminated by God. In my illness, I too was considering my own prospects and destination, without any consideration for the church's work. In these churches, I was the only one doing text-based work, but I worried that the effort would be detrimental to my health, fearing that if my condition worsened and I died, I would miss the chance at salvation, and so I wanted to shirk my duty and switch to an easier one. The truth was, my illness was not particularly severe, and after contracting COVID-19, my body was somewhat weak and I had some unfavorable symptoms, but resting for a while when I felt uncomfortable helped. Yet I kept thinking about my own body, which delayed the work. I was truly selfish and despicable, lacking any conscience and reason. I thought about those who had been revealed and eliminated. Some had initially been zealous and had expended

themselves, but they did not pursue truth and only sought blessings. When confronted by illness and death, seeing their hopes for blessings shattered, they became filled with complaint, negative and negligent, and they even abandoned their duties, leaving and betraying God. My views on pursuit were similar to theirs, and if I did not repent, I would end up being eliminated like them.

One day, I felt the pain at the cancer site worsening, and I began to have wild thoughts again, thinking, “Has the cancer spread throughout my body?” I was really scared, and told myself, “Even if the cancer has spread, I will still submit to God’s sovereign arrangements.” I went to the hospital for an examination, and the doctor said that there was only mild inflammation at the site, with no cancer cells, and suggested that I continue taking traditional Chinese medicine for treatment. Looking at the test results, I knew this was God’s mercy toward me, and that God was giving me a chance to live so that I could repent and change. During my devotionals, I read a passage of God’s words that really moved my heart. Almighty God says: **“In this life, people have but a limited time to go from understanding things to having this opportunity, possessing this caliber, and satisfying the conditions to engage in dialogue with the Creator, so as to reach true understanding, knowledge, and fear of the Creator, and walk the way of fearing God and shunning evil. If now you want God to quickly lead you away, you are not being responsible with your own life. To be responsible, you should work harder to equip yourself with the truth, reflect on yourself more when things happen to you, and quickly compensate for your own shortcomings. You should come to practice the truth, to act in accordance with the principles, to enter into the truth reality, to know more of God, to be able to know and understand God’s intentions, and to not live your life in vain. You**

must come to know where the Creator is, what the Creator's intentions are, and how the Creator expresses joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness—even if you cannot attain a deeper awareness or complete knowledge, you must at least possess a basic understanding of God, never betray God, be fundamentally compatible with God, show consideration to God, offer basic consolation to God, and do what is proper and basically achievable for a created being. These are no easy things. In the process of performing their duties, people can gradually come to know themselves, and thereby know God. This process is actually an interaction between the Creator and created beings, and it should be a process worth reminiscing on throughout one's life. This process is something people should be able to enjoy, rather than a painful and difficult process. Therefore, people should cherish the days and nights, years and months spent performing their duties. They should cherish this phase of life, and should not regard it as an encumbrance or burden. They should savor and gain experiential knowledge of this stage of their lives. Then, they will attain an understanding of the truth and live out the semblance of a human being, possess a God-fearing heart, and do less and less evil” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). From God's words, I found a path to practice and enter the truth. To be saved and perfected, one must pursue the truth, cherish the various environments arranged by God, understand one's own corruption and deficiencies from them, base everything on God's words, focus on practicing the truth, and live out the reality of God's words, only then can one walk the path to salvation. Looking back on my illness, I failed because I only made empty declarations to experience God's work, I did not cherish this environment meticulously arranged by God, much less contemplate what corrupt

disposition God was revealing through this illness, or what aspects of the truth I should enter. Instead, I treated this illness as a nuisance and a burden. With my way of experiencing things, even if my body were healthy and free of disease or trouble, I would not be able to be saved. God has not yet taken my life and has still given me a chance to live. I must have conscience and reason, equip myself with the truth, and focus on living out the reality of God's words.

Later, I caught COVID-19 twice in a row, and the pain in my chest worsened noticeably. I couldn't help but begin to have wild thoughts again, such as, "Could it be that cancer has also developed in my lungs?" Thinking this, I felt an indescribable discomfort in my heart. On the day of the work summary with the text-based team, I was worried again, thinking, "I've only just recovered; what if I get infected again when I go outside? My body can't endure any more suffering." I wanted to ask the leader to go in my place. But when these thoughts arose, I recalled this passage in God's words: **"People should cherish the days and nights, years and months spent performing their duties. They should cherish this phase of life, and should not regard it as an encumbrance or burden. They should savor and gain experiential knowledge of this stage of their lives. Then, they will attain an understanding of the truth and live out the semblance of a human being, possess a God-fearing heart, and do less and less evil"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). Reflecting on God's words, I gradually calmed down, and I realized that my illness had not yet truly endangered my life, and that it was just some pain in my chest. I considered my desire to shirk my duty due to physical discomfort. In what way had I been loyal and submissive to God? I had been so selfish! I hadn't focused on seeking the truth or experiencing God's work, and had missed many

opportunities to gain the truth. Now I couldn't afford to miss any more of these opportunities. I must accept and submit, and truly experience this environment. Even if I got infected with COVID-19 again, it was a suffering I must endure, and I must do my duty to satisfy God. When I thought this way, my heart felt liberated, and was no longer bound or constrained by negative emotions. After putting my heart into the performance of my duty, I felt grounded and at peace.

85. How Home Truths Should Be Regarded

By Melinda, USA

In November of 2017, I was elected as a church leader. When I first started gathering or discussing with brothers and sisters, I was able to share my views, and my fellowship had some light. The brothers and sisters thought quite highly of me and spoke with me respectfully. So I felt that I was valued and was quite pleased with myself. After a period of time, I noticed my partner, Sister Wendy, was quite frank in how she spoke to me, and would sometimes bring up my problems directly when she observed them. For instance, when I didn't consider the general affairs of the church, she brought it up and told me to focus on that. But I felt I'd lost a bit of face, and so I said I would focus on it going forward, lest I give people a bad impression of me. But I was quite deficient in this area—either I couldn't think about certain things, or if I did, I didn't know how to do them. Later on, when Wendy brought it up a few more times, I would claim that I'd focus on it going forward, but really I was thinking, "Everyone has always said that I bear a burden in my duty, and yet Wendy has this criticism of me. I wonder what the others will think of me now." I felt like Wendy was keeping a close eye on my issues, that she looked down on me, and so I felt like avoiding her. Sometimes when we were discussing work and I brought up an idea, Wendy would directly tell me she didn't find it suitable. Sometimes her tone was inappropriate and she would put me on the spot. I felt she was too aggressive and had no regard for my dignity. I felt she had poor humanity and was hard to get along with. On a few occasions, I tried to talk with Wendy or tell her to come eat when she was on the phone, but she didn't respond immediately, which convinced me even further she had poor humanity and was too cold, so I had even less

desire to interact with her. I had a much easier partnership with the other two sisters. I could sense that they thought highly of me when we spoke about work or our current states and they spoke to me respectfully. When they had issues, they'd often come to me for advice and would rarely point out my issues. I felt so at ease whenever I chatted with them or discussed work. The more I interacted with them, the more I felt Wendy was hard to get along with, and I just kept as far away from her as possible. I actually got the sense that Wendy was willing to work together with me, she would seek me out to discuss things, but I'd just respond perfunctorily, and wasn't really willing to get close to her, because I felt she had poor humanity. Sometimes, certain vicious thoughts would occur to me, "It would be better if Wendy wasn't in our group, then no one would nitpick my flaws."

I remember one time, during the church's annual leader election, I kept a close eye on Wendy's election results. I thought to myself, "There's no way she'll get elected with her poor humanity." But to my surprise, everyone said she bore a burden in her duty and was very responsible. No one said anything about her having any glaring problems with her humanity. The upper leadership also said Wendy was a right person. I felt so confused: "So no one has gained discernment of Wendy? She's so arrogant and loves exposing other people's weaknesses—clear signs of poor humanity." I really didn't want to be partnered with her again, but when the results came out, we were both elected as leaders. I felt so encumbered when I thought about how I would have to partner with Wendy going forward. After that, I would rarely ever seek out Wendy to discuss work. It was mostly Wendy that would come to me and I'd put off meetings as much as possible. I'd only discuss with her when I couldn't put it off any longer and wasn't willing to open up to her and say what was in my heart. One time, two brothers reported an issue with Wendy. They said she rarely

fellowshipped on life entry and seemed to focus more on work. I realized that ever since I'd partnered with Wendy, she rarely spoke about life entry, and she didn't proactively fellowship during gatherings. Without bothering to understand her actual situation or fellowshiping with her, I immediately brought this issue up with two deacons. On the surface, I was just discussing her issue, but in reality what I was saying was: "Wendy is a church leader, and if she just focuses on work and doesn't emphasize fellowshiping truth to resolve issues, then she's not suited for the role." At the time, I was speaking in service of my private intentions. The deacons agreed with me that Wendy didn't value life entry and wasn't suited to be a church leader. I also told them, "Wendy is quite overbearing, and she doesn't consider other people's feelings when she speaks, which can be constraining." As soon as I said that, one of the deacons chimed in to say Wendy had recently brought up her deficiencies and she had felt quite uncomfortable. This further proved to me that Wendy had a problem with her humanity. I then said, "Wendy has poor humanity and is quite cold." And I brought up a few examples for them. Even though I felt a bit guilty while saying it, when I considered how Wendy had constrained me, I felt sure that there was a problem with her. After hearing what I had to say, the two deacons also agreed that Wendy had poor humanity. They would also privately criticize Wendy as I had, and when we would have online gatherings, we'd send messages to each other while Wendy was fellowshiping, saying how poor her life entry and fellowship was. One time, a deacon and another sister came to chat about my current state. When they asked me how my partnership with Wendy was going, I said, "She's fairly overbearing, her tone is improper and sometimes she ignores me when I talk to her. She seems quite cold and I feel constrained by her." At the time, these two sisters had no discernment of me and said they would

seek from the upper leader. After all, given that Wendy was a church leader, any problems she had would influence the church's work. After hearing that, I thought, "If she's dismissed by the upper leader, I won't have to partner with her anymore."

The next day we had a meeting with the upper leader and I brought up many of Wendy's issues. I mentioned her poor life entry and humanity and how I felt constrained by her. The two other sisters also added their own comments. The upper leader was a bit surprised to hear all that—She said she was familiar with Wendy and hadn't realized she was like that. She promised to look into the matter further. Just a few days later, the upper leader informed me that based on how I dealt with Wendy, how I ganged up on her, secretly tried to undermine her, judged her and didn't play a positive role, it was clear I had poor humanity, was not worth cultivating, and that according to principle, I should be dismissed. I was shocked—I never imagined things would turn out that way. "Ganging up," "secretly undermining," "judging," "poor humanity," "not worth cultivating," these characterizations hit me like a ton of bricks. I couldn't believe it, much less was I willing to accept it. I just couldn't understand: Ever since I was little, I had always been well thought of by others. How could it be that now she was saying I had poor humanity? Did I hear her wrong? That process of being exposed and dissected was like a bad dream, and I felt terribly agonized. After being dismissed, I didn't want to face what had happened. I couldn't accept that criticism of my humanity, didn't think I was that kind of person and didn't bother to reflect on myself at all. When I did discuss my dismissal, I glossed over the grave nature of the situation, saying people had always said I had good humanity, and was kind and understanding. I meant that this was all just an accident and not reflective of my true nature. After that, on several occasions my leader considered assigning me to an

important duty, but ultimately decided against it due to my poor humanity. This made me feel just awful, and I weepingly appealed to God, “O God, is there really no saving me? Is my humanity really that bad? Please guide me to know myself. I am willing to reflect.” After praying, I came across this passage of God’s words: **“In which matters in your daily lives do you have a God-fearing heart? And in which matters do you not? Are you able to hate someone when they offend you or impinge on your interests? And when you hate someone, are you capable of punishing them and getting revenge? (Yes.) Then you are quite scary! If you do not have a God-fearing heart, and are able to do evil things, then this vicious disposition of yours is far too severe! Love and hatred are things which normal humanity should possess, but you must differentiate clearly between what you love and what you hate. In your heart, you should love God, love the truth, love positive things, and love your brothers and sisters, whereas you should hate Satan and devils, hate negative things, hate antichrists, and hate evil people. If you are capable of suppressing and taking revenge on your brothers and sisters out of hatred, this would be very frightening, and this is the disposition of an evil person. Some people simply have hateful thoughts and ideas—evil ideas, but they would never do anything evil. These are not evil people because when something happens, they are able to seek the truth, and they pay attention to the principles in how they conduct themselves and deal with things. When interacting with others, they do not ask more of them than they should; if they get along with the person well, they will keep interacting with them; if they do not get along, then they won’t. It barely affects the performance of their duty or their life entry. God is in their heart and they have a God-fearing heart. They are unwilling to offend God, and are afraid to do so.**

Though these people might harbor certain incorrect thoughts and ideas, they are able to rebel against and abandon them. They exercise restraint in their actions, and do not utter a single word that is out of line, or which offends God. Someone who speaks and acts this way is someone who has principles and who practices the truth. Your personality might be incompatible with another person's, and you may not like them, but when you work together with them, you remain impartial and will not vent your frustrations in doing your duty, or take out your frustrations on the interests of God's family; you can handle affairs according to principles. What is this a manifestation of? It is a manifestation of having a basic God-fearing heart. If you have a bit more than that, when you see that someone else has some inadequacies or weaknesses, then even if they have offended you or have a bias against you, you still have it in you to treat them correctly and lovingly help them. This means there is love in you, that you are a person who possesses humanity, that you are someone who is kind and who can practice the truth, that you are an honest person who possesses truth realities, and that you are someone with a God-fearing heart. If you are still of small stature but you have a will, and are willing to strive for the truth, and to strive to do things according to principle, and you are able to deal with things and act toward others with principle, then this also counts as having somewhat of a God-fearing heart; this is most fundamental. If you cannot even achieve this, and cannot restrain yourself, then you are in great danger and are quite frightening. If you were given a position, you could punish people and give them a hard time; you would then be liable to turn into an antichrist at any moment” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Through

God's words I learned that people who have God-fearing hearts will not speak and act frivolously. Even if other people threaten their interests, they will not attack or ostracize people for fear of offending God. God has no place in the hearts of those who do not fear Him, and so they do and say as they please. They punish and take revenge on anyone that threatens their interests. God says **“this is the disposition of an evil person.”** This phrase “the disposition of an evil person” really cut to the quick and scene after scene of my interactions with Wendy flooded my mind. She spoke relatively candidly and she would often give me some advice and point out my deficiencies in my duty, which made me feel like I'd lost face. As such, I felt that Wendy had poor humanity and was hard to get along with. Sometimes when Wendy didn't respond right away when I spoke with her, I became even more convinced she had poor humanity and disliked her even more. When I heard someone say she didn't focus on life entry, I didn't look into the context and didn't consider her consistent behavior, and just took the opportunity to tell this to my partners. I told them Wendy focuses on work and not life entry and is thus not suitable to serve as a leader. I wanted to draw them to my side to isolate Wendy. Thinking back now, Wendy was under a lot of pressure as the supervisor of the church's gospel work. She had a lot of work to keep track of and sometimes she'd get agitated when there were issues in the work and they didn't get results. Only talking about work and not focusing on fellowshiping truth principles was a deviation in her duty. It didn't mean she wasn't suited for the duty. But I judged Wendy with the intention of getting her dismissed so that I wouldn't have to partner with her anymore. Wasn't I trying to punish her? What's more, everyone gets in a bad mood sometimes. Who can be all happy-go-lucky all the time? After all, Wendy was busy with work, so it was normal that she didn't have time to pay attention to me, it was

understandable. But I made a big deal of the fact that she ignored me, and concluded that she had poor humanity and was too cold. This didn't accord with reality—I was blindly branding her with an unwarranted label and condemning her. I also spread these ideas to the other sisters, which caused them to have ever larger biases toward Wendy. And they followed me in judging her behind her back and stopped focusing on their duties. My disposition must have been quite vicious to do things like that. When Wendy's actions and speech threatened my interests and reputation, I condemned, attacked and took vengeance on her. I saw that I didn't have the slightest fear of God in my heart. As a church leader, not only did I fail to partner well with my brothers and sisters and do my duty according to principle, I even took the lead in doing evil and disrupting church work. I really wasn't worthy of doing such an important duty. I had thought I had great humanity, was kind and understanding, but that was just because other people hadn't threatened my interests. As soon as that happened, my vicious nature was exposed and I was able to judge, attack and take vengeance on people. Only upon realizing this did I see that I had poor humanity. It was with God's righteousness that I was dismissed, I deserved that fate.

After that, I opened up to my brothers and sisters, dissected the intentions behind my actions and shared my reflections on and knowledge of myself. My brothers and sisters all encouraged me. They said, "You can gain self-knowledge through dismissal, this is a good thing!" I gained some knowledge of myself through that experience and felt less despondent. I was also able to accept being exposed to a degree. I prayed to God, "O God, I have truly done evil. Going forward I'm willing to repent." After that, when I revealed my corrupt disposition when interacting with others, I would pray to God, reflect on myself, and focus on partnering harmoniously

with others. I also began to seek more earnestly in my duty and my days felt full and rich. After just a few days, my upper leader came to me and said that in the past I was too arrogant, didn't accept other people's advice and didn't treat people according to principle, but after being dismissed, I had learned to reflect on and know myself, so everyone had agreed to let me return to my role as leader. I was so surprised when I heard this. I never imagined that I'd have another chance to serve as a leader. I couldn't express how touched I felt and was full of gratitude to God. At the same time, I was so regretful for everything I'd done in the past. I prayed to God in my heart and resolved to repent, not repeat my past mistakes, partner well with others and put my heart into my duty.

Later on, I reflected on myself again: "Why couldn't I let go of my bias toward Wendy before and even judged her behind her back and undermined her?" One time during devotionals, I came across a passage of God's words that said: **"First of all, with antichrists, when it comes to the matter of being pruned, they are unable to accept it. And there are reasons they are unable to accept it, the main one being that when they are pruned, they feel they have lost face, that they have lost their reputation, status and dignity, that they have been left unable to raise their heads in front of everyone. These things have an effect in their hearts, so they find it hard to accept being pruned, and they feel that whoever prunes them has it out for them and is their enemy. This is the mentality of antichrists when they are pruned. Of this, you can be sure. It is in pruning, in fact, that whether someone can accept the truth and whether someone can truly submit is most revealed. That antichrists are so resistant to pruning suffices to show that they are averse to the truth and do not accept it in the least. This, then, is the crux of the problem. Their pride is not the crux of the matter; not accepting the**

truth is the essence of the problem. When they are pruned, antichrists demand that it be done with a nice tone and attitude. If the doer's tone is serious and their attitude is severe, an antichrist will resist and be defiant, and grow furious from shame. They pay no mind to whether what is exposed in them is right or whether it is a fact, and they do not reflect on where they have erred or on whether they should accept the truth. They think only of whether their vanity and pride have suffered a blow. Antichrists are entirely unable to recognize that pruning is helpful to people, and loving, and salvific, that they are of benefit to people. They cannot even see this. Is this not a bit indiscriminating and unreasonable of them? So, when faced with being pruned, what disposition is it that an antichrist reveals? Without any doubt, that disposition is one of being averse to the truth, as well as one of arrogance and intransigence. This reveals that the nature essence of antichrists is one of being averse to the truth and hating it" (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). God reveals how antichrists are too concerned with protecting their status and reputation, and when faced with pruning, they don't reflect on and know themselves at all, instead resisting, denying, and thinking other people have it out for them. They even attack and take revenge on people—all these behaviors are displays of their dispositions which are averse to and hate the truth. Applying the revelation of God's words to my situation, I saw that my judgment, undermining, attacking, and avenging of Wendy were all displays of my antichrist disposition. When I was partnered with Wendy, she would often give me advice and point out my deficiencies, but she wasn't pruning me. I didn't reflect on whether what Wendy said was true, whether I'd done wrong or what I could learn from what she'd said. Instead, I would always have my eyes on her, thinking she had it out for me and looked down on me. I even

concluded that she had poor humanity. I didn't recognize my own issues at all. At that time, I was serving as church leader and also split my time supervising general affairs, but because I felt that I wasn't well-versed in general affairs, I didn't bother to manage or inquire about that work, nor did I seek out others who were skilled in that area for help. I was failing to do actual work—Wendy was right to bring this up! When Wendy brought up deviations in my work and gave me some suggestions, she was helping me improve. Yet, I only considered my reputation and status and felt that she was questioning my work capability. I even took her reminders and assistance personally, and sought to get back at her by rallying others to my side, and getting people to judge and ostracize Wendy with me, all of which was harmful to Wendy. This also created a contentious atmosphere that prevented everyone from being able to focus on their duty and disrupted the church's work. Wasn't I just playing the role of Satan? I should truly have been cursed and punished! I thought of those evil people and antichrists who had been cleared out from the church. They were averse to and hated the truth, failed to accept situations from God, and got hung up on people threatening their interests, thinking those people have it out for them and over-analyzing their actions; they failed to reflect and gain self-knowledge at all when others often reminded them, helped them or pruned them. What's more, they hated whoever tried to correct them and attacked and ostracized them, disturbing those around them, disrupting the church's work and ultimately doing so much evil that they were cleared out. These are all consequences of not accepting and being averse to the truth—they all got what they deserve! Given these characteristics, was I not just acting like an evil person and an antichrist? I realized that I was truly corrupt and had poor humanity. I felt so afraid, I was in a terribly precarious situation and if I didn't repent God would loathe me and eliminate me. I had to seize the

chance to repent and do my best to pursue the truth, approach situations with a God-fearing heart, seek the truth, reflect on and know myself, be prudent in how I spoke, and set good intentions in my interactions. I came before God in prayer and said I would stop acting how I had before, and that I was willing to accept God's scrutiny and truly repent.

Later on, I came upon another passage of God's words, that helped me understand how to judge a person's humanity and how to treat people that speak frankly and give me advice. God says: **"You must get close to people who can speak truthfully to you; having people like this beside you is greatly to your advantage. In particular, having such good people around you as those who, when they discover a problem with you, have the courage to reproach you and expose you, can prevent you from going astray. They don't care what your status is, and the moment they discover that you have done something against the truth principles, then they will reproach and expose you if necessary. Only such people are upright people, people with a sense of justice, and no matter how they expose and reproach you, it is all of help to you, and it is all about supervising you and pushing you forward. You must draw close to such people; having such people beside you, helping you, you become relatively much safer—this is what it is to have God's protection. Having people who understand the truth and uphold principles by your side every day supervising you is so beneficial to you doing your duty and work well. ... When you do something that goes against principles, they will expose you, give opinions on your issues, and point out your problems and faults frankly and honestly; they will not try to help you save face, and they will not even give you a chance to avoid embarrassment in front of lots of people. How should you treat such people? Should you punish them or get close to them? (Get close to**

them.) That's right. You should open your heart and fellowship with them, saying, 'That issue I have that you pointed out to me was right. At the time, I was filled with vanity and thoughts of status. I felt that I had been a leader for so many years, yet not only did you not try to help me save face, but you also pointed out my problems in front of so many people, and so I couldn't accept it. Now, however, I see that what I did really was at odds with principles and the truth, and that I shouldn't have done that. What does having the position of leader count for? Isn't this simply my duty? We're all doing our duty and we're all equal in status. The only difference is that I shoulder a little more responsibility, that's all. If you discover any problem in the future, then say what you ought to say, and there shall be no personal grudges between us. If we differ in our comprehension of the truth, then we can fellowship together. In God's house and before God and the truth, we shall be united, not estranged.' This is an attitude of practicing and loving the truth. What should you do if you wish to give the path of an antichrist a wide berth? You should take the initiative to draw close to people who love the truth, people who are upright, get close to people who can point out your issues, who can speak truthfully and reproach you when they discover your problems, and especially people who can prune you when they discover your problems—these are the people who are most beneficial to you, and you should cherish them. If you exclude and get rid of such good people, then you will lose God's protection, and disaster will gradually come to you. By getting close to good people and people who understand the truth, you will have peace and joy, and you will be able to keep disaster at bay; by getting close to vile people, shameless people, and people who flatter you, you will be in danger. Not only will you be easily duped and

tricked, but disaster may come upon you at any time. You must know what kind of person can benefit you the most—it is those who can warn you when you do something wrong, or when you exalt and testify about yourself and mislead others, that can benefit you the most. Getting close to such people is the correct path to take” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). Through God’s words, I realized that people with a sense of justice that uphold the truth principle can point out when their brothers and sisters have issues or deficiencies, and can prune, expose and dissect people when they go against principles in their actions, such people have good humanity, and I should keep close to them. If someone is outwardly loving, gets along well with people, doesn’t offend anyone and is well-liked, but when they observe something happening that doesn’t accord with principle or harms the church’s interests and they choose to protect their relationships and do not stand up, expose and stop the problem, they are selfish and deceitful and are not protecting the interests of God’s house. I thought of how I always judged people’s humanity based on whether they were amiable, and whether they spoke in a way that preserved people’s dignity, but this judgment was not in keeping with the truth. I realized that Wendy often pointing out my issues and deficiencies showed her sense of justice. Despite the fact that Wendy spoke in a very direct way, she spoke the truth and could point out my issues, this would help me fulfill my duty and improve my life entry. I should spend more time with her and listen to her suggestions. If one accepts the truth, he does not care what kind of tone people have who point out their issues; as long as what they say is at least partially true, he will accept it, seek the truth and learn some lessons. This is an improvement for him. After that, I apologized to Wendy. I knew the damage I’d caused her was irrevocable,

but if I had another chance to partner with her, I would cherish the opportunity.

Later on, I was partnered up with Brother Leonard. Leonard had good caliber and was quite responsible in his duty. If he saw me deviating in my duty, he would point it out to me in front of the others. At first, despite feeling a bit embarrassed, I was able to take his criticism as a lesson from God. But as time went on, and the pattern continued, I began to become a bit fed up. Sometimes Leonard would be a bit scornful in his criticism, and would find fault in my work. I felt so embarrassed, like he had seen right through me and I no longer wanted to partner with him. I thought he was too arrogant and his tone of voice was unacceptable. A few times while discussing my partnership with others, I had wanted to disparage Leonard, but just as I would be about to say something I'd realize I was wrong—there was certainly much that I could enter into in Leonard's criticism. So, I prayed to God, set good intentions and sought how to partner with Leonard in a way that accorded with God's intention. I couldn't judge Leonard with ill intentions. Later on, I came across a passage of God's words that was quite helpful to me. God says: **“When you discover you are doing something wrong or have the revelation of a corrupt disposition, if you are able to open up to and communicate with people, this will help those around you to keep an eye on you. It is certainly necessary to accept supervision, but the main thing is to pray to God and rely on Him, subjecting yourself to constant examination. Especially when you have gone the wrong way or done something wrong, or when you are about to act or decide something on your own, and someone nearby mentions it and alerts you, you need to accept that and hasten to reflect on yourself, and admit to your mistake, and correct it. This can keep you from setting foot on the path of antichrists. If there is someone**

helping and alerting you in this way, are you not being protected without knowing it? You are—that is your protection” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). God’s words reminded me that having someone by my side with a sense of justice that had the confidence to speak directly and promptly point out my deficiencies was a form of protection, that it would prevent me from going astray and was God’s love. The right thing to do was accept the situation! During that period, I had been content just to do some insubstantial work, but I had failed to pay a price in doing any substantial work of watering newcomers. Leonard’s frequent reminders had made me a bit more pragmatic in my duty. I had also gained a lot from the paths of practice Leonard had told me about. I realized that his help and advice were really valuable. Given that I did not possess truth, still had severely corrupt dispositions and could do wrong at any time, having Leonard to watch over me was a real boost and would prevent me from doing a lot of evil. Realizing this, I felt ready to resolve the deviations in my duty and gained a better attitude toward Leonard’s advice. I sent him a message that said, “Going forward, please let me know if you notice anything problematic about me. I might feel a bit embarrassed, but it would be helpful for me.” Looking back now, God had placed many such people at my side in these past years, but I had always wanted to avoid them because I thought they were hard to get along with. In fact, it was that I was a poor judge of people, didn’t know how to evaluate or treat people, and so I unwittingly lost out on opportunities to learn from my partners. When God once again orchestrated this situation, I finally came to understand His intention, was able to treat others with principle and I felt so much more liberated! I gave thanks to God in my heart!

86. Growing Amid Adversity

By Zhenai, China

On August 23, 2022, the district leader invited several of us preachers to a gathering. We waited until the afternoon, but the leader did not show up. Later, we learned that the church leaders, and many brothers and sisters had been arrested. Sister Lu Yang, who had lived with me, had also been arrested. Additionally, the leader who had invited us to the gathering had been out of contact for a whole day and night, and it was almost certain that something had happened to him. Hearing this news left me stunned. The arrest had hit dozens of churches and it had all taken place early on the 23rd, pointing to a coordinated action by the CCP. I recalled that the leader had visited my home a couple of times just a few days before, and I wondered if I might also be a target. If I were, would I also be arrested one day? The CCP does not see believers as human beings and uses all kinds of torture to force them to betray God. I was supervising the work of several churches, and if I were arrested, the CCP would certainly not let me go easily. Thinking about this made my chest tighten, and I became anxious at every tiny movement outside, fearing that I might be arrested at any moment. Realizing that my state was not right, I quickly prayed to God, “God, with the church facing major crackdowns, I feel very timid. Please protect me and give me faith so that I am not constrained by this environment.” After praying, I remembered the movie, *My Story, Our Story*, and I quickly found it to watch. One passage of God’s words in the movie gave me faith.

Almighty God says: **“Though Satan looked upon Job with covetous eyes, without God’s permission it did not dare to touch a single hair on Job’s body. Though Satan is inherently evil and cruel, after God issued**

His order to it, it had no choice but to abide by God's command. Thus, even though Satan was as frenzied as a wolf among sheep when it came upon Job, it did not dare to forget the limits set for it by God, did not dare to violate the orders of God, and in all that it did, Satan did not dare to deviate from the principles and limits of God's words—is this not a fact? From this it can be seen that Satan does not dare to contravene any of the words of Jehovah God. For Satan, every word from the mouth of God is an order and a heavenly law, an expression of God's authority—for behind every word of God is implied God's punishment of those who violate the orders of God, and of those who disobey and oppose the heavenly laws” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). God's words clearly tell us that no matter how savage Satan is, it cannot exceed God's commands or overstep the boundaries or limits set by God. No matter how fiendish Satan is, it is still a service object in God's hands, and a tool used to perfect God's chosen people. Reflecting on God's words, I realized that on the day of the large-scale crackdown, the leader had planned to gather with a few of us, and if the police had carried out the operation a bit later, we preachers would have been arrested along with the leader. I saw that the arrests of brothers and sisters are permitted by God. Satan cannot act without God's permission; this is God's authority. This was particularly clear when I saw the brothers in prison in the film, relying on God to pass on His words under strict surveillance and helping and supporting each other, and that their faith in God became even stronger. No matter how the CCP used threats or enticements, they stood firm in their testimony. This demonstrated the power of God's words. Seeing the experience of these brothers, I was no longer so fearful. I thought about how I often proclaimed God's almightiness and sovereignty over all things, and how I frequently said I would protect the church's work. But when I

heard that more and more people were being arrested, I was filled with timidity and fear. My previous resolve and promises seemed long forgotten, and in particular, the thought of suffering torture if I were arrested made my concerns surface. When faced with reality, I finally saw how small my faith was. As soon as I encountered danger, I became timid and fearful, and began worrying about my own physical safety. In what way did I have any stature? Realizing this, I prayed to God, asking Him to give me faith so that I could fulfill my duties and stand firm in my testimony during adversity.

Following this incident, there was lots of important aftermath work that needed to be seen to. To prevent the books of God's words from falling into the hands of the CCP, it was decided that Sister Gao Qing and I would be responsible for transferring them. Seeing how I was being asked to do such an important task, and knowing the significance of this responsibility, I was willing to cooperate. However, thinking about the dangers involved in the transfer, I couldn't help but feel a bit scared, "If we get arrested and the CCP learns we are transporting the books of God's words, they would surely force us to reveal more church information and subject us to torture. Even if we don't die, we will be dragged through the wringer! What will I do if I become disabled? Not only would I not be able to do a duty, but I'd also have problems taking care of myself. Wouldn't that be the end for me? Could I still be saved then? I lack both courage and wisdom. Can I really handle this duty? Shouldn't we find someone braver and wiser for this responsibility?" I was about to say this to the sisters, but I hesitated and swallowed my words. I thought of how, given the limited number of people who could be contacted in this context, it was only after careful consideration, that everyone decided that I would take on this task. I thought of these words of God: **"You should uphold and take**

responsibility for anything that relates to the interests of the house of God, or which concerns the work of God's house and the name of God. Each of you has this responsibility and obligation, and this is what you must do" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On God's Administrative Decrees in the Age of Kingdom). No matter the time, protecting the interests of God's house and ensuring the safety of the books of God's words is the responsibility and obligation of every one of God's chosen people. I had been a believer for many years and enjoyed the watering and provision of God's words, yet, when the safety of the books of God's words was at risk and they needed to be moved, I was not proactive in cooperating. Instead, I was only considering my own future prospects and paths. Out of fear of being arrested and tortured, I wanted to pass this duty off to somebody else. I was so selfish and lacking in conscience and reason! Since everyone agreed that I was the most suitable person to transfer the books of God's words, it must contain God's intention. Especially considering I was not arrested during this large-scale crackdown, I clearly had a role to play, and I should not refuse it. I am a created being; God knows what I can do. Whether I would be arrested or not was in God's hands. If God were to ordain that I should be arrested, I would submit, but if God does not permit this, the CCP cannot do anything to me. Just as Daniel had faith in God, and even when he was thrown into the lion's den, the lions did not harm him. No matter how rampant the CCP is, it is still in God's hands, and it is merely a service object in God's work. With this understanding, I gained faith and prayed to God, "God, now the books of Your words need to be urgently transferred, and I feel timid and fearful, but I know that Satan is in Your hands. I am willing to set aside my own safety and work with Sister Gao Qing to deliver the books to a safe place. Please guide us." The next

morning, we set out in the thick fog and successfully delivered the books to a safe location.

Because several church leaders had been arrested, Sister Gao Qing and I were temporarily promoted to supervise the work of these churches. I knew I should not shirk my duty, but I felt a lot of pressure. Taking on this duty at such a critical moment was indeed very dangerous. However, with the leaders arrested and the church's work almost at a standstill, the brothers and sisters could not live their church life and urgently needed someone to shoulder the work. At this time, I would have been lacking in humanity to shirk this duty. After much consideration, I accepted the duty. However, not long after, I learned that during interrogations, the police were showing photos to the arrested brothers and sisters, asking them to identify the leaders. The CCP was constantly arresting leaders, and if they knew I was now a church leader, wouldn't I also face a severe sentence if arrested? I thought of the brothers and sisters who had been arrested and sentenced. Some had been abused by inmates in prison, others were severely beaten and tortured by prison guards, and they had to do heavy physical labor every day. Given my already weak health, once I was arrested and sentenced, every day would feel like a year in prison, and whether I would be able to make it out is hard to say. Doing duties in China is indeed fraught with danger, like standing on the edge of a knife with constant life-threatening risks. I kept thinking that it would have been better if I hadn't taken on this duty.... I was deeply worried and couldn't focus on my work. Realizing my state was not right, I quickly prayed to God, asking Him to protect my heart.

That night, I couldn't sleep at all. I reflected on how when faced with the large-scale crackdown on the church, I had revealed only cowardice and fear, and that I had even wanted to shirk my duty to protect myself. Why

did I keep thinking about myself when facing adversity? During my devotionals, I read two passages of God's words: **"Antichrists do their utmost to protect their safety. What they think to themselves is: 'I absolutely must guarantee my safety. No matter who gets caught, it mustn't be me.'** In this matter, they often come before God in prayer, pleading that God keeps them from getting into trouble. They feel that no matter what, they are indeed carrying out the work of a church leader and that God should protect them. For the sake of their own safety and to avoid being arrested, escape all persecution and situate themselves in a safe environment, antichrists often implore and pray for their own safety. Only when it comes to their own safety do they truly rely upon and offer themselves up to God. They have real faith when it comes to this and their reliance upon God is real. They only bother to pray to God asking that He protect their safety, not giving the slightest thought to the church's work or their duty. In their work, personal safety is the principle that guides them. If a place is safe, then antichrists will choose that place to work, and, indeed, they will seem very proactive and positive, showing off their great 'sense of responsibility' and 'loyalty.' If some work does entail risk and is liable to meet with incident, to get its doer found out by the great red dragon, they make their excuses and refuse it, and find a chance to flee from it. As soon as there is danger, or as soon as there is a hint of danger, they think of ways to extricate themselves and abandon their duty, without a care for the brothers and sisters. They care only about getting themselves out of danger. They may already be prepared at heart: As soon as danger appears, they drop the work they are doing at once, without a care for how the church's work goes, or for what loss it may incur to the interests of God's house, or for the safety of the brothers

and sisters. What matters to them is fleeing” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). **“Antichrists are extremely selfish and despicable. They do not have true faith in God, much less loyalty to God; when they encounter an issue, they only protect and safeguard themselves. For them, nothing is more important than their own safety. As long as they can live and won’t get arrested, they don’t care how much harm is done to the work of the church. These people are extremely selfish, they don’t think of the brothers and sisters at all, or of the work of the church, they only think of their own safety. They are antichrists”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God exposes that the nature of an antichrist is extremely selfish and despicable. They prioritize their own interests above all else, and in any given situation, if something touches on their interests, they will not hesitate to protect themselves. Antichrists are entirely profit-driven, and lack any sense of conscience or reason. They adhere to the satanic philosophy of “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” and live out a complete image of Satan. Reflecting on God’s words and my own behavior, hadn’t I revealed the selfish and despicable disposition of an antichrist? Normally, when there was no threat of arrest, I was very proactive in doing my duties, no matter how hard or tiring they were, showing a facade of loyalty to my duties and submission to God. But when the church faced a large-scale crackdown and the duties arranged for me involved my own personal interests, my selfishness and despicableness were revealed. When the brothers and sisters put me forward to transfer the books of God’s words, I wanted to pass the duty to someone else to protect myself. When the church temporarily promoted me to be a leader, instead of focusing on how to carry out church work well and shoulder this responsibility, I worried about being arrested and sentenced, and I even thought of shirking the duty to protect

myself. I was so afraid of death! It is said that sincerity is revealed in adversity, but did I behave with sincerity as I faced adversity? No! I revealed nothing but selfishness and insincerity! I thought about all these years enjoying the watering and provision of God's words, but when the church was facing a large-scale crackdown and needed my cooperation, I looked for excuses to shirk my duty and protect myself. In what way did I have any humanity? I'd prayed to God, saying I was willing to expend myself for Him and repay His love, yet what I was living out was selfish and despicable, and trying to protect myself. Isn't this deceiving God? If it weren't for these facts being revealed and the judgment and exposure of God's words, I would still not have any true understanding of my selfish and self-serving satanic disposition. I would still think I held sincerity for God and that He surely approves of me, and that when God's work concluded, I would enter the kingdom and enjoy God's blessings. I truly didn't know myself! God's work is so practical. Through the persecution and arrests carried out by the great red dragon, He has revealed my corruption and helped me understand myself. This is God's salvation for me! Thinking on this, I felt remorseful and no longer wanted to live according to Satan's philosophies.

Later, I came across a passage of God's words that was very enlightening to me. God says: **"If you acknowledge that you are a created being, you must prepare yourself to suffer and pay a price for the sake of fulfilling your responsibility to spread the gospel and for the sake of doing your duty properly. The price might be suffering some physical ailment or hardship, or suffering the persecutions of the great red dragon or the misunderstandings of worldly people, as well as the tribulations one undergoes when spreading the gospel: being sold out, being beaten and scolded, being condemned—even being mobbed and**

put in mortal danger. It is possible, in the course of spreading the gospel, that you will die before God's work is completed, and that you will not live to see the day of God's glory. You must be prepared for this. This is not meant to frighten you; it is a fact. ... Moreover, how did those disciples of the Lord Jesus die? Among the disciples, there were those who were stoned, dragged behind a horse, crucified upside down, dismembered by five horses—every sort of death befell them. What was the reason for their deaths? Were they lawfully executed for their crimes? No. They were condemned, beaten, scolded, and put to death because they spread the Lord's gospel and were rejected by the people of the world—that is how they were martyred. ... Actually, this was how their bodies died and passed away; this was their means of departure from the human world, yet that did not mean their outcome was the same. No matter what the means of their death and departure was nor how it happened, it was not how God defined the final outcomes of those lives, of those created beings. This is something you must see clearly. On the contrary, they used precisely those means to condemn this world and to testify to God's deeds. These created beings used their most precious lives—they used the last moment of their lives to testify to God's deeds, to testify to God's great power, and to declare to Satan and the world that God's deeds are right, that the Lord Jesus is God, that He is the Lord, and God's incarnate flesh. Even down to the final moment of their lives, they never denied the name of the Lord Jesus. Was this not a form of judgment upon this world? They used their lives to proclaim to the world, to confirm to human beings that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, that the Lord Jesus is Christ, that He is God's incarnate flesh, that the work of redemption He did for all humanity allows humanity to live on—this fact is forever unchanging.

Those who were martyred for spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to what extent did they perform their duty? Was it to the ultimate extent? How was the ultimate extent manifested? (They offered their lives.) That's right, they paid the price with their lives. Family, wealth, and the material things of this life are all external things; the only thing that is related to the self is life. To every living person, life is the thing most worthy of being treasured, the most precious thing and, as it happens, these people were able to offer their most precious possession—life—as confirmation of and testimony to God's love for mankind. Until the day they died, they did not deny God's name, nor did they deny God's work, and they used their last moments of life to testify to the existence of this fact—is this not the highest form of testimony? This is the best way of doing one's duty; this is what it is to fulfill one's responsibility” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). After reading God's words, I understood that if we truly see the meaning of life and the value of life and death clearly, and live according to God's words, we can have genuine submission to God and stand firm in our testimony to Him in times of adversity. Life is the most precious thing for each of us. If we can entrust our lives to God, then nothing can defeat us. Thinking about how I had followed God up to this point, I had been able to gradually let go of things like work, family, marriage, and wealth, but when faced with danger and the possibility of losing my life, my rebelliousness was exposed. I wanted to shirk my duties to protect myself. I was too afraid of death! The CCP's insane persecution and arrests are intended to make us timid and fearful, abandon our faith in God, give up our duties, and betray Him, making us lose the chance of salvation. This is Satan's scheme. Only by entrusting our lives to God, fulfilling our duties with a heart of submission no matter how

God orchestrates and arranges things, can we defeat and put Satan to shame. I had always thought that if I died from persecution, I would not be saved, but this was my own notion and imagining. In the Age of Grace, the apostles experienced persecution and arrests by the Roman government. Some were killed by the sword, and others were crucified upside down. They paid with their lives to spread the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and used their lives to bear witness to the salvation of the Lord Jesus, thereby receiving God's approval. Today, many brothers and sisters are also arrested and persecuted for spreading God's gospel of the last days. They suffer torture and beatings, leading to disability or even death, but they choose to stand firm in testimony to God, refusing to succumb to Satan even in death. Such a death is meaningful. Though physical bodies die from a human perspective, their souls do not. This is all under God's arrangement. To offer one's life to bear witness to God is the highest form of testimony. Reflecting on this, I felt enlightened. This current environment was God's way of testing me, to see whether, in facing this adverse situation I would choose to fulfill my duties and stand firm in my testimony or I would give up my duties and live a pointless life. God was observing my attitude and practices. The Lord Jesus said: **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). **"He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it"** (Matthew 10:39). My life is in God's hands. Though Satan can imprison and harm my body, it cannot control my fate or destination. Each person's life is in God's hands, and everything we experience is arranged appropriately by Him. If I were to abandon my duties to protect myself, this would be betraying God and I would lose my chance at salvation. God gave me life and brought me into this world, so there is a

mission for me to complete. Being able to follow the Creator and fulfill my duties as a created being means my life is not lived in vain! God's words inspired my heart. No matter what the future holds, it is perfectly natural and justified for a created being to submit to the Creator. I was willing to entrust my life to God, do what I could, and fulfill my duties. Later, to quickly restore church life, we called a gathering with the church deacons. We fellowshiped on how to persist in our duties during times of adversity, and the intention of God in the face of persecution and arrests, and we also implemented various tasks. Two months later, the church life of the brothers and sisters gradually returned to normal.

One day in November, we suddenly received news that church leader Li Zhong and fifteen other brothers and sisters had been forcibly arrested and taken away by the police. My heart tightened again, and I felt even more hatred toward the CCP, the demon. The next morning, we urgently discussed with coworkers the issue of moving the books of God's words to safety. Since I was the only one who knew the new location, it was decided that I would transport the books to the new site. However, I thought to myself, "There are always vehicles and cameras everywhere on this journey, it's impossible to avoid them. If I am discovered during the move, it will be irrefutable evidence, and I will surely be sentenced. What if I am persecuted to the point of death? This is too dangerous! Maybe someone else should go." But just as I was about to suggest this, I swallowed my words. At this critical moment, I was still considering my personal safety. In what way was I showing any loyalty? I was too afraid of death! My life is in God's hands, not under my own control. I needed to be loyal to God. Thinking of this, I prayed to God, "God, I am so selfish and despicable. I was trying to push my duties away again. Now I am willing to entrust my life to You. Please guide me to fulfill my duties at this crucial moment and

to safely transfer the books.” At this moment, I recalled some of God’s words: **“With your duty and what’s yours to do, and bigger than that, with the commission given by God and your obligation, as well as important work that’s outside your duty but needs you to do it, work that’s arranged for you and that you are called by name to do—you should pay the price, however difficult it may be. Even if you need to apply yourself to the fullest, even if persecution should loom, and even if it should put your life at risk, you’re not to begrudge the cost, but to offer up your loyalty and submit unto death”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. Why Man Must Pursue the Truth). God’s words gave me faith and strength. There was God’s intention in the duty that came to me that day, and whether or not I would be arrested was also ordained by God. Since it was most suitable for me to transfer the books of God’s words at that moment, I should submit unconditionally. Later, with everyone’s cooperation, I successfully transported the books to the safe place.

Through this experience, I gained some insights: When I was in a dangerous situation, God’s words provided me with faith and courage, allowing me to persevere in my duties. At the same time, I saw how fearful I was and how much I valued my own life. I gained some understanding of my selfish and profit-motivated satanic disposition, and came to see death more clearly, becoming less scared. I became more steadfast in my faith to follow God and pursue a meaningful life. These insights are things I could not have gained in a comfortable environment.

87. Overcoming the Darkness of Inferiority

By Kristina, USA

I was really shy when I was young, and whenever guests came over, I would hide behind my parents, and when my parents told me to call them uncle or aunt, I felt too shy to do so. My mom would joke with the guests, saying, “This kid is mute and can’t speak.” My mom would also often say I would never amount to anything or make anything of myself. Because of my clumsiness with words, I was often laughed at and criticized, and I was really scared to speak in front of others. Whenever I found myself in a situation where I had to speak, I would do my utmost to get out of it. During my school years, I never participated in any activities, and I always hid in a corner, quietly studying. The year I graduated from university, the teacher said I was qualified to be recommended for graduate school, and I was very happy, but when I heard there would be an interview with the professors, I became very anxious, thinking about how my communication skills were poor, and that if I answered incoherently, I’d end up humiliating myself. I fought with myself for a few days but still couldn’t find the courage to attend the interview. After finding God, I saw brothers and sisters gathering and fellowshiping openly and simply, and that no one laughed at anyone, and I felt liberated. Gradually, I started to train to speak from the heart with everyone, sharing my state and understandings. Sometimes I would ramble a bit, but the brothers and sisters didn’t look down on me, and I felt less constrained. Over time, I began to talk more. Later, during one gathering, I strayed off-topic while fellowshiping, and the group leader interrupted me. I felt my face flush with embarrassment, and I just wanted to find a hole to hide in. I remembered my parents saying I would never amount to anything, and it seemed that they were right. I felt

that my clumsiness with words made me completely useless, and that I'd spend my life unnoticed in the corner. At that moment, I told myself, "I should speak less in front of people to avoid exposing my flaws and being laughed at." After that, for a long time, I kept my lips sealed. Outside of group gatherings, I remained silent, just listening to others' fellowship. Sometimes I had my own experiential understanding, but then I'd think about how I couldn't structure what I wanted to say and about how I rambled, and I thought that if I were interrupted again, I'd be utterly humiliated, so I didn't want to fellowship. Later on, I was working on making videos for the church. The brothers and sisters chose me as the team leader because they saw I was more skilled in this area. But when I thought about how being a team leader meant I'd have to frequently implement and follow up on work, and that I'd have to fellowship and solve brothers' and sisters' problems, I felt worried, thinking, "With my clumsy speech, what if I fail to do this duty well? That would be so humiliating." The more I thought about it, the more scared I became, so I told the leader that I had poor caliber and couldn't do this duty, so they should choose another brother or sister for the role. The leader fellowshiped God's intentions to me, suggesting that I rely on God and train for a while to see how it goes, and I reluctantly agreed. During my time as team leader, I was really passive, and each time I had to host a gathering or fellowship, I would shrink back, letting my partnered sister speak more. My partnered sister didn't understand why I was doing this. She said that I'd been able to discover issues while doing my duty, had my own thoughts and perspectives, and could express some insights while fellowshiping God's words, and that my caliber wasn't that poor, so she wondered why I always avoided speaking. She encouraged me to practice more. But no matter what she said, I still felt inadequate, and I even tried resigning on several

occasions. In the end, I was dismissed because I was too passive in my duty. Later, the team leader asked me to cooperate with her on supervising the team's work. I was a bit worried, thinking, "I'm not good at speaking; I hope I don't embarrass myself." The team leader fellowshipped God's intentions with me, saying she needed someone who was knowledgeable about these skills to cooperate with her. Hearing the leader say this made me feel a bit guilty. Although I was clumsy with words, I could still do some work in this area, and cooperating with the team leader was necessary for the work. If I always shirk, wouldn't this be delaying the work? With these thoughts in mind, I agreed. After that, I kept asking myself, "Why do I always try to run away and pull out when asked to be the team leader? What exactly is it that's causing this behavior?" With these confusions in mind, I prayed to God to seek.

During one gathering, the leader read a passage of God's words, and it addressed my issue, clearing up this confusion in my heart. Almighty God says: **"There are some people who, as children, were ordinary-looking, inarticulate, and not very quick-witted, causing others in their families and social environments to give rather unfavorable appraisals of them, saying things like: 'This kid is dull-witted, slow, and a clumsy speaker. Look at other people's children, who are so well-spoken that they can wrap people around their little finger. Whereas this kid just pouts all day long. He doesn't know what to say when meeting people, doesn't know how to explain or justify himself after doing something wrong, and can't amuse people. This kid is an idiot.' The parents say this, relatives and friends say this, and their teachers also say this. This environment exerts a certain, invisible pressure on such individuals. Through experiencing these environments, they unconsciously develop a certain kind of mindset. What kind of mindset? They think that they**

are not good-looking, not very likable, and that others are never happy to see them. They believe that they are not good at studying, are slow, and always feel embarrassed to open their mouths and speak in front of others. They are too embarrassed to say thank you when people give them something, thinking to themselves, 'Why am I always so tongue-tied? Why are other people such smooth talkers? I'm just stupid!' Subconsciously, they think they are worthless.... People who feel inferior do not know what their strengths are. They just think that they are unlikable, always feel stupid, and do not know how to deal with things. In short, they feel they cannot do anything, are unattractive, are not clever, and have slow reactions. They are unremarkable compared to others and do not get good grades in their studies. After growing up in such an environment, this mindset of inferiority gradually takes over. It turns into a kind of lingering emotion that becomes tangled with your heart and fills your mind. Regardless of whether you are already grown, have gone out into the world, are married and established in your career, and regardless of your social status, this feeling of inferiority that was planted in your environment growing up is impossible to get rid of. Even after you start believing in God and join the church, you still think that you have average looks, have poor intellectual caliber, are inarticulate, and cannot do anything. You think, 'I'll just do what I can. I don't need to aspire to be a leader, I don't need to pursue profound truths, I'll just be content with being the least significant one, and let others treat me however they like.' When antichrists and false leaders appear, you feel unable to discern or expose them, that you are not cut out for doing that. You feel that as long as you yourself are not a false leader or antichrist then that is enough, that as long as you do not cause disruptions and disturbances

then that is fine, and that it is enough so long as you can stand in your own position. In the depths of your heart, you feel that you are not good enough and are not as good as other people, that others are perhaps objects for salvation, and that you, at best, are a service-doer, and so you feel you are not up to the task of pursuing the truth. Irrespective of how much truth you are able to understand, you still feel that, seeing as God has predestined you to have the kind of caliber you do and to look the way you do, then perhaps He has predestined you to be merely a service-doer, and that you have nothing to do with pursuing the truth, becoming a leader, becoming someone in a position of responsibility, or being saved; instead, you are willing to be the most insignificant person. This feeling of inferiority is perhaps not inborn in you, but on another level, because of your family environment and the environment you grew up in, you were subjected to moderate blows or improper judgments, and this caused the feeling of inferiority to arise in you. This emotion affects the correct direction of your pursuits, influences the proper aspiration for your pursuits, and it also inhibits your proper pursuits. Once your proper pursuit and the proper determination you should have in your humanity are inhibited, then your motivation to pursue positive things and to pursue the truth is stifled. This stifling is not brought about by your surrounding environment or by any person, and of course God has not determined that you should suffer it, rather it is brought about by a strongly negative emotion deep in your heart” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)).

After reading God’s words, I realized that I’d always been scared of speaking in front of others and doing my duty as a team leader because of my feelings of inferiority. When I was young, I was too shy to greet strangers, and my parents would often say I was mute and

couldn't speak, and that I would never amount to anything, and relatives would say I was an idiot for not knowing how to abide by social conventions in what I'd say. These words deeply hurt my self-esteem and made me feel inferior. As a result, I constantly defined myself as someone who wasn't good at speaking, and whenever I was in a situation that required me to speak up, I would panic, and so I avoided and rejected any duties that required me to fellowship and speak frequently. When I saw people who were more articulate and who had better caliber than I did, I felt inferior and ashamed, and I would just become negative and withdraw. Even when given the opportunity to be a team leader, I felt I wasn't cut out for it, and I had no willingness to cooperate actively. My feelings of inferiority affected my perspectives and goals of pursuit, causing me to constantly delimit myself and avoid taking on responsibilities, which made me miss many opportunities to be perfected, leading to losses to my life entry. Now God's house had still given me the opportunity to train to be a team leader, and I didn't want to delimit myself with the constraints of my feelings of inferiority, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me and give me faith, so that I could break free from the bonds and constraints of my feelings of inferiority.

Later, I read another passage of God's words, which showed me the path to resolve my feelings of inferiority. Almighty God says: **"Regardless of what situation caused your feeling of inferiority to arise or who or what event caused it to arise, you should harbor the correct understanding toward your own caliber, your strengths, your talents, and the quality of your own humanity. It is not right to feel inferior, nor is it right to feel superior—they are both negative emotions. Inferiority can bind your actions, bind your thoughts, and influence your views and standpoint. Similarly, superiority has this negative effect, too."**

Therefore, whether it is inferiority or another negative emotion, you should harbor the correct understanding toward the interpretations that lead to the arising of this emotion. Firstly, you should understand that those interpretations are incorrect, and whether it is regarding your caliber, your talent, or the quality of your humanity, the assessments and conclusions they make about you are always wrong. So, how can you accurately evaluate and know yourself, and break away from the feeling of inferiority? You should take God's words as the basis for gaining knowledge of yourself, learning what your humanity, caliber, and talent are like, and what strengths you have. ... In this kind of situation, you must make a correct evaluation and take the correct measure of yourself according to God's words. You should establish what you have learned and where your strengths lie, and go out and do whatever it is that you can do; as for those things which you cannot do, your shortcomings and deficiencies, you should reflect on and know them, and you should also accurately evaluate and know what your caliber is like, and whether it is good or bad. If you cannot understand or gain clear knowledge of your own problems, then ask the people around you with understanding to make an appraisal of you. Regardless of whether what they say is accurate, it will at least give you something to reference and consider and will enable you to have a basic judgment or characterization of yourself. You can then solve the essential problem of negative emotions like inferiority, and gradually emerge from them. Such feelings of inferiority are easy to resolve if one can discern them, awaken to them, and seek the truth'' (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). After reading God's words, my heart felt brighter. To overcome feelings of inferiority, I need to have an accurate understanding of myself, measure myself according to God's

words, objectively assess my strengths and weaknesses, and strive to accomplish what I'm capable of, and for my shortcomings, I should face them calmly and treat them correctly. This way, I can do my duties without feeling constrained. I reflected on all my years of feeling inferior, and I saw that I felt this way because my parents always criticized me for being clumsy with my words and for being bad at expressing myself, and I felt that my communication skills were poor, and that I couldn't express my thoughts concisely, so whenever I had to do duties where I needed to speak and fellowship frequently, I felt scared. I then calmed down to assess myself, "After reading God's words, I'm able to gain some insights, and I can share my experiential understandings to help my brothers and sisters, which they said were helpful to them. I can also solve some skill-related problems, and even though my communication skills are poor and I ramble, these problems aren't so bad that I can't express myself clearly or accomplish any tasks. Furthermore, this isn't a terminal issue, as I can make improvements in this area by writing articles and training more in fellowship." Recognizing this, I no longer felt so overwhelmed by the pressure of doing my duties as a team leader, and I found myself able to cooperate actively. When I noticed the issues my brothers and sisters faced in their duties, I did my best to help solve them, and I regularly followed up on the work progress of the brothers and sisters in our team, looking into their difficulties and discussing solutions with them, and if I couldn't solve something, I would consult with my partnered sister, and in the end, we could always find some way forward. By practically cooperating like this, I found that I could express my thoughts clearly, that my brothers and sisters could understand me, and I gained some confidence in my duties as a team leader. After some time, the leaders came to me and said that after some discussion, they wanted to cultivate me as a supervisor. I was both surprised

and happy to hear this news, but then I quickly thought about how my language skills were poor, and how I could barely manage as a team leader, and that the brothers and sisters in the team were aware of my shortcomings, and they were able to understand if my fellowship was lacking, but as a supervisor, I would interact with many more people, and gatherings and work implementations would require me to take the lead in fellowship. With my poor speaking skills, I feared that I would expose my shortcomings as soon as I opened my mouth to fellowship, and that if I fellowshiped poorly, I'd end up utterly humiliating myself. So I told the leaders, "I can't do it, I'm not cut out for this role, it'd be better to cultivate another sister." The leaders then fellowshiped God's intentions to me, encouraging me not to delimit myself, to train and see how it goes, and to cooperate with others to solve any difficulties. So I agreed to cooperate for a while.

After that, I wondered, "I realized that I was influenced by my feelings of inferiority, and I was able to view myself correctly, so why did I still hesitate to take on the role of supervisor and want to run from it?" During one of my devotionals, I read a couple of passages from God's words, which helped me gain some clarity on some of my issues. God says: **"What kind of disposition is it when people always put up a front, always whitewash themselves, always put on airs so that others think highly of them, and cannot see their faults or shortcomings, when they always try to present their best side to people? This is arrogance, fakery, hypocrisy, it is the disposition of Satan, it is something wicked. Take members of the satanic regime: No matter how much they fight, feud, or kill in the dark, no one is allowed to report or expose them. They are afraid that people will see their demonic face, and they do everything they can to cover it up. In public, they do their utmost to whitewash**

themselves, saying how much they love the people, how great, glorious and infallible they are. This is the nature of Satan. The most prominent feature of Satan's nature is trickery and deception. And what is the aim of this trickery and deception? To hoodwink people, to stop them from seeing its essence and true colors, and thus achieve the aim of prolonging its rule. Ordinary people may lack such power and status, but they, too, wish to make others hold a favorable view of them, and for people to have a high estimation of them, and elevate them to a high status in their hearts. This is a corrupt disposition, and if people do not understand the truth, they are incapable of recognizing this" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). **"People who never open their hearts, who always try to hide and conceal things, who pretend that they are respectable, who want people to think highly of them, who don't allow others to get a full measure of them, who want people to admire them—are these people not foolish? These people are the most foolish! That's because the truth about people will be exposed sooner or later. What path do they walk with this kind of comportment? This is the path of the Pharisees. Are hypocrites in danger or not? These are the people God detests the most, so do you think they are in danger or not? All those who are Pharisees walk the road to destruction!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). God exposes that people often conceal and disguise themselves, hiding their flaws and shortcomings from others to protect their reputation and status. Such people are arrogant, fake, and hypocritical. I examined my behavior in light of God's words, and I realized that I was the kind of person exposed by God. Since childhood, I had been controlled by the idea that "People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark," and I placed great importance on my pride and status in

others' hearts, always wanting people to have a good opinion and image of me. Because I was clumsy with my speech and often criticized by adults in my childhood, I believed this was my shortcoming, so whenever I was in a situation where I'd have to speak, I'd choose to avoid it. After finding God, during fellowship at gatherings, I was once interrupted by brothers and sisters for rambling and going off-topic, and I felt humiliated. After that, I didn't want to fellowship during gatherings anymore and was afraid to speak in front of others. My behavior was a way of concealing and disguising myself, preventing others from seeing my flaws and shortcomings so I wouldn't be looked down upon, and instead make people think I was modest and not a show-off, giving people a good impression and opinion of me. When brothers and sisters gather together, the purpose is to fellowship on their experiential understandings regarding God's words and to help and support one another, but because I wanted to hide my shortcomings, I avoided fellowshipping my experiential understandings. The church cultivated me to serve as a team leader and gave me an opportunity for training, yet I kept running from and declining duties. Even as a team leader, I lacked the resolve to cooperate, was negative and passive, and wanted to resign. To protect my pride and status, I kept shirking my duties, using my poor caliber as an excuse to cover up my desire for reputation and status. This way, brothers and sisters not only wouldn't question my refusal to do my duties, but would also perceive me as reasonable, self-aware, and not competing for status, and they'd form a good impression of me. I was using underhanded methods to protect my pride and status, and in this, I was deceiving and misleading my brothers and sisters. This was truly deceitful of me!

Through seeking and thinking things through, I realized that I had another viewpoint within me. I believed that only those with good speaking

skills were qualified to be leaders and workers, and that if one lacked good speaking skills, they weren't cut out for this role. But was this viewpoint actually right? I read a passage of God's words: **"Among the various types of talented people I mentioned just now, the first type was those who can be supervisors of the various items of work. The first requirement for them is that they have the ability and caliber to comprehend the truth. This is the minimum requirement. The second requirement is that they carry a burden—this is indispensable. Some people comprehend the truth more quickly than ordinary people, have spiritual understanding, are of good caliber, possess work capability, and after practicing for a period of time, can absolutely stand on their own two feet. But there is a serious problem with these people—they carry no burden. ... There are also people whose caliber is more than adequate for a job, but unfortunately they just don't carry a burden, they don't like to take on responsibility, they don't like trouble, and they don't like worrying. They are blind to the work that needs doing, and even if they can see it, they don't want to take care of it. Are people of this type candidates for promotion and cultivation? Absolutely not; people must carry a burden in order to be promoted and cultivated. Carrying a burden can also be described as having a sense of responsibility. Having a sense of responsibility is more to do with humanity; carrying a burden relates to one of the standards God's house uses for measuring people. Those who carry a burden while additionally possessing two other things—the ability and caliber to comprehend the truth, and work capability—are the type of people who can be promoted and cultivated, and this type of people can be supervisors of the various items of work. These are the required standards for promoting and cultivating people to become various**

types of supervisors, and people who meet these standards are candidates for promotion and cultivation” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). From God’s words, I see that to be a leader and worker mainly depends on a person’s humanity and their ability to comprehend the truth. Also, it depends on if they have a sense of burden for the work and a sense of responsibility. When people with good communication skills fellowship the truth to solve problems, they can articulate their thoughts clearly and logically, and they can grasp key points, allowing others to understand them immediately. This is beneficial to their fulfillment of duties. However, if a supervisor has good speaking skills, caliber, and strong work capabilities, but they have poor humanity, crave comfort, and dislike working, and they lack a sense of burden for their duties and are irresponsible, then such a person is also unsuited to be a leader and worker. Many leaders and workers have had good speaking skills and caliber, but due to their lacking a sense of burden for their duties and not doing real work, and indulging in the benefits of their positions, they were dismissed. Conversely, there have been leaders and workers with slightly poorer speaking skills and caliber, but who have a sense of burden for their duties and a sense of responsibility, who work diligently, and who can resolve real issues for their brothers and sisters in their duties. Such leaders and workers can perform real work as well, and the church provides them with opportunities for training. In the past, I delimited myself as being unfit to be a team leader or a supervisor just because of my poor speaking abilities and communication skills. This was due to my failure to seek the truth, and I couldn’t continue to delimit myself with these fallacious views.

Moving forward, I focused on how I could fully shoulder my duties to the best of my abilities, and strive to reach my potential, and I also

consciously reflected on God's words, focusing on seeking and practicing the truth in the situations I encountered. When I had some actual understanding of God's words, I practiced writing testimony articles. Gradually, I learned how to speak logically and coherently, and how to clearly express my thoughts so that others could understand, and I began to get to grips with the skills involved in communication. When it came time to implement work during gatherings, I was no longer as scared as before when my partnered sister asked me to take the lead, and I could also summarize issues and deviations with everyone, thus improving the effectiveness of my duties. By practicing this way, I felt at peace and at ease, and gradually, I walked out of the shadow of my feelings of inferiority, and I became much brighter than before. I was no longer the person who hid in the dark corner, too scared to say anything. I am grateful for the enlightenment and guidance of God's words for allowing me to gradually step out of the shadow of my inferiority and to become able to do my duties as a created being.

88. Principles for Interacting With Others

By Jingxin, China

In August 2022, I cooperated with Liu Xuan and Zhang Qi to make videos. Since I was new to video making and hadn't grasped some principles, Liu Xuan, the team leader, often helped me. We were about the same age and had common interests, so we quickly became familiar with each other and had a good relationship.

Once, Zhang Qi encountered some complex problems while making a video and asked Liu Xuan for help. Liu Xuan analyzed and discussed the problems with her, but Zhang Qi's completed video still had some issues. Liu Xuan then said disdainfully, "We already discussed this yesterday, and you still made a video like this!" Seeing that Zhang Qi felt somewhat constrained and kept her head down without saying anything, I thought, "Liu Xuan's approach would hurt Zhang Qi. We should calmly communicate when we encounter problems, which would be more conducive to future improvements." I thought about bringing this up with Liu Xuan, but I hesitated, thinking, "If Liu Xuan accepts it, that's fine. But if she doesn't and retorts, putting me in an awkward position, it would be so embarrassing for me! What if Liu Xuan thinks I'm siding with Zhang Qi and starts to dislike me? How will I get along with her in the future? Forget it. Maybe it's better not to say anything." Later, Liu Xuan also realized she had revealed an arrogant disposition, but she only made a simple acknowledgment without truly understanding herself. I thought about fellowshiping with her, but hesitated again when the words were on the tip of my tongue: "She has already admitted she was arrogant. If I point it out again and fellowship with her, will she think that my demands of her are too great? What if she develops a bias against me? Better let it go." And so, the

matter passed like that. There was another time when our team made a video that wasn't up to standard. As the team leader, Liu Xuan didn't lead us in digging out the cause. A few days later, other brothers and sisters carried out an analysis and communication with us based on the principles. Only then did I realize where the problem was. I suggested that we hurry to learn about this aspect of the technical skills. However, Liu Xuan didn't take this seriously, saying that she had studied this aspect of the technical skills before and already knew it, so she didn't organize for us to learn about it. I noticed Liu Xuan's casual attitude toward technical study. She was clearly not proficient but was complacent and unwilling to learn. And as the team leader, she didn't summarize the deviations. I wanted to talk with her about her problems, but then I thought, "Will Liu Xuan feel embarrassed if I say this? What if I hurt her pride and she develops a bias against me?" So, I didn't tell her anything but kept silent once again. Later, when our supervisor asked about my state, I wanted to write these things to her. But I worried, "If Liu Xuan sees this, will she say that I backstabbed her instead of pointing out her problems to her face, and that I took advantage of writing about my state to report her problems? If Liu Xuan has negative opinions of me, how will I get along with her in the future?" With these concerns, I didn't mention Liu Xuan's issues at all. On the surface, Liu Xuan and I chatted and laughed together, but whenever I needed to point out her problems, I would constantly second-guess her response. Even when I saw her problems clearly, I didn't dare to speak honestly. It was so miserable and stifling! During that period, I frequently prayed to God, asking for His enlightenment and guidance to understand myself and break free from the bonds of my corrupt disposition.

One day, during a communication about our states, Liu Xuan mentioned that there was a lack of genuine communion between us. She

pointed out that I tended to be a people pleaser, saying that I rarely brought up her problems even if I saw them. She said she also needed others' correction and help, and as she spoke, she cried sadly. Hearing Liu Xuan's words, I felt deeply self-reproached and pained. It turned out that in her eyes, I was such a people pleaser, and she wasn't as resistant to the truth as I had thought her to be. Why couldn't I bring myself to say a word to point out or expose her problems? I ate and drank the words of God directed at this problem. I read a passage of God's words: **"When interacting with the brothers and sisters, you must lay your heart bare to them and confide in them in order for it to benefit you. When performing your duty, it is even more important to lay your heart bare and confide in people; only then will you work well together. ... Sometimes, when two people interact, their personalities clash, or their family environments, backgrounds or economic conditions do not match. Yet if those two people can lay their hearts bare to each other and be entirely open about their issues, and communicate without any lies or deceit, and are able to show their hearts to each other, then, in this way, they will be able to become genuine friends, which means to become intimate friends. Perhaps, when the other person has a difficulty, they will look for you and no one else, and they will trust only you to be able to help them. Even if you give them a telling-off, they don't argue back, because they know you are an honest person with a sincere heart. They trust you, so no matter what you say or how you treat them, they will be able to understand. Can you be such people? Are you such people? If not, then you are not honest people. When you interact with others, you must first have them perceive your true heart and sincerity. If, in speaking and working together and making contact with others, someone's words are perfunctory, grandiloquent, pleasantries, flattery,**

irresponsible, and imaginary, or if they simply speak to seek the other's favor, then their words lack all credibility, and they are not sincere in the least. This is their mode of interaction with others, no matter who those others are. Such a person does not have an honest heart. This is not an honest person” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). From God's words, I understood that even though I saw Liu Xuan constrain others with her arrogant disposition and treat technical study with a casual attitude, I didn't say anything to correct or help her. It was because of my deceitful nature and excessive wariness of others. I was worried that if Liu Xuan didn't accept my suggestions and developed a bias against me, it would ruin the relationship between us. Thinking back, usually when Liu Xuan saw my problems, she pointed them out directly, which was a real help for me. But I was so guarded against her. Even if I identified her problems, I never fellowshiped or pointed them out, only showing a false front without any sincerity at all. I was really deceitful! I thought pointing out others' problems was offensive and would hurt them, but this view was wrong. In fact, when we see other people reveal their corruptions, we should be simply honest and open up our heart to them, and point out their problems promptly. This will help them reflect on themselves and correct deviations, and prevents losses to church work as well. It is a way of helping others. I realized my views on things were completely distorted and didn't align with the truth at all. Later, I shared with Liu Xuan her problems that I saw. The supervisor also wrote to fellowship to help Liu Xuan.

After some time, Liu Xuan began to have some understanding of her arrogant disposition and took the initiative to lead us in learning technical skills. The efficiency of our duties also increased. Seeing these results, I felt deeply ashamed and self-reproached. If I had spoken up earlier, Liu Xuan

could have recognized her problems sooner, which would benefit both our harmonious collaboration and communication of the technical skills. In regret, I reflected and wondered: Why was it that every time I spotted others' problems, I couldn't bring myself to speak up, even though the words were on the tip of my tongue? What corrupt disposition is controlling me behind the scenes? One day, I read two passages of God's words: **"When people take no responsibility toward their duties, do them in a perfunctory manner, act like people pleasers, and do not defend the interests of the house of God, what disposition is this? This is cunningness, it is the disposition of Satan. The most prominent aspect of man's philosophies for worldly dealings is cunningness. People think that if they are not cunning, they will be liable to offend others and unable to protect themselves; they think that they must be cunning enough not to hurt or offend anyone, thereby keeping themselves safe, protecting their livelihoods, and gaining a firm foothold among other people. Nonbelievers all live by Satan's philosophies. They are all people pleasers and do not offend anyone. You have come to the house of God, read the word of God, and listened to the sermons of God's house, so why are you unable to practice the truth, speak from the heart, and be an honest person? Why are you always a people pleaser? People pleasers only protect their own interests, and not the interests of the church. When they see someone do evil and harm the church's interests, they ignore it. They like to be people pleasers, and do not offend anyone. This is irresponsible, and that kind of person is too cunning and untrustworthy"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"To all appearances, the antichrists' words seem especially kind, cultured, and distinguished. No matter who violates principle or disrupts and disturbs church work, the antichrist does not**

expose or criticize these people; they turn a blind eye, letting people think they are magnanimous in all matters. Regardless of what corruptions people reveal and what evil deeds they do, the antichrist is understanding and tolerant. They do not grow angry, or fly into a rage, they will not get cross and blame people when they do something wrong and harm the interests of God's house. No matter who commits evil and disturbs the work of the church, they pay no heed, as if this has nothing to do with them, and they will never offend people because of it. What are the antichrists most concerned with? With how many people think highly of them, and with how many people see them when they suffer, and praise them for it. The antichrists believe that suffering must never be for nothing; no matter what hardship they endure, what price they pay, what good deeds they do, how caring, considerate, and loving they are toward others, this must all be carried out in front of others so that more people can see it. And what is their aim in acting thus? To buy people's favor, to make more people approve of their actions, their conduct, and their character in their hearts, giving a thumbs up. There are even antichrists that try to establish an image of themselves as 'a good person' through this outwardly good behavior, so that more people come to them looking for help" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). God's words expose the truth so clearly! For people with deceitful and cunning dispositions, when they see others reveal corruptions or disrupt church work, they never point it out and expose them. Outwardly, they seem tolerant and patient, but their real goal is to use outward kindness to make others think they are loving and considerate, thereby winning people over and buying their favor. Their nature is extremely wicked. Just like me, when I saw Liu Xuan disdain and constrain Zhang Qi, and saw that Liu Xuan, as our team leader, failed to organize technical study and delayed

the work, I wanted to point out her problems. But I swallowed my words when they were on the tip of my tongue, worrying that Liu Xuan might not accept and would develop a bias against me, making our future interactions difficult. So, I always stayed silent. Even when writing about my state, I feared that when Liu Xuan saw this, she might think I was reporting her problems behind her back, so I avoided mentioning her. On the surface, I didn't offend anyone and seemed quite amicable, but my real intention was to maintain a good relationship with Liu Xuan. To keep a positive image in her mind, I couldn't bring myself to say anything truly honest or beneficial. I didn't consider whether brothers and sisters' life entry would suffer or whether church work would be delayed due to this. I was so selfish, despicable, slick and deceitful! I was truly a complete people pleaser! How could God not be disgusted by me and loathe me?

Later, I read more of God's words: **“There is a tenet in philosophies for worldly dealings that says, ‘Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship.’ It means that in order to preserve a friendly relationship, one must keep silent about their friend's problems, even if they see them clearly—that they should abide by the principles of not striking people in the face or calling out their shortcomings. They are to deceive each other, hide from each other, engage in intrigue with each other; and though they know with crystal clarity what sort of person the other is, they do not say it outright, but employ cunning methods to preserve their friendly relationship. Why would one want to preserve such relationships? It is about not wanting to make enemies in this society, within one's group, which would mean subjecting oneself often to dangerous situations. Knowing someone will become your enemy and harm you after you have called out their shortcomings or hurt them, and not wishing to put yourself in such a**

situation, you employ the tenet of philosophies for worldly dealings that runs, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings.' In light of this, if two people are in such a relationship, do they count as true friends? (No.) They are not true friends, much less each other's confidant. So, what sort of relationship is this, exactly? Is it not a fundamental social relationship? (It is.) In such social relationships, people cannot offer their feelings, nor have deep exchanges, nor speak about whatever they wish. They cannot say out loud what is in their heart, or the problems they see in the other, or words that would benefit the other. Instead, they pick nice things to say, to keep the other's favor. They dare not speak the truth or uphold the principles, lest it give rise to animosity toward them in others. When no one is threatening to someone, does that person not live in relative ease and peace? Is this not people's goal in promoting the saying, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings'? (It is.) Clearly, this is a cunning, deceptive way of existence with an element of defensiveness, whose goal is self-preservation. People who live like this have no confidants, no close friends with whom they can say whatever they like. They are defensive with each other, and calculating, and strategic, each taking what they need from the relationship. Is this not so? At its root, the goal of 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings' is to keep from offending others and making enemies, to protect oneself by not causing hurt to anyone. It is a technique and method one adopts to keep themselves from being hurt. Looking at these several facets of its essence, is the demand of people's moral conduct 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their

shortcomings’ a noble one? Is it a positive one? (No.) Then, what does it teach people? That you must not upset or hurt anyone, otherwise, you are the one who will end up getting hurt; and also, that you should not trust anyone. If you hurt any one of your good friends, the friendship will quietly start to change: They will go from being your good, close friend to a stranger or an enemy. What problems can it resolve, teaching people to act so? Even if, by acting in this way, you do not make enemies and even lose a few, will this make people admire and approve of you, and always keep you as a friend? Does this fully achieve the standard for moral conduct? At the very best, this is no more than a philosophy for worldly dealings” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). From God’s words, I understood that sayings such as “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings,” “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship,” “Speak good words in harmony with others’ feelings and reason, as being frank annoys others,” and “When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less,” are satanic philosophies for worldly dealings. Satan instills these ideas in humans, making them believe that to stand firm in society, they must maintain relationships with people, always save face for others, and be slick and people-pleasing. Otherwise, they’ll be excluded. When people rely on these philosophies for worldly dealings to interact with others, they become suspicious and defensive toward each other. They constantly read others’ tone and expressions when they speak or do things, acting one way on the surface while hiding their true thoughts. They never speak honest or heartfelt words, becoming increasingly hypocritical and wicked, living without dignity or integrity. I had always been afraid to point out Liu Xuan’s problems just because I was influenced by these satanic

philosophies for worldly dealings. I believed that to maintain good relationships with people and secure my place among them, I had to be cautious in my words and actions, never saying anything others didn't like or pointing out their deficiencies and shortcomings. I thought I had to save face for others. Otherwise, I would offend them and make enemies. Before believing in God, I interacted with people this way—always being cautious, reading others' tone and expressions, and being suspicious and guarded against others. Even with my closest family or best friends, I wouldn't point out their problems for fear of being disliked and isolated. Although people said I was nice, I was actually living a very tiring life. After believing in God, I continued to interact with brothers and sisters in the same way, without a sincere heart. I clearly saw Liu Xuan's issues, but to maintain my relationship with her, I never pointed them out to her and just kept my true thoughts to myself. Outwardly, I got along well with her and there was nothing we could not chat about. Living by these satanic philosophies, I took the middle road, trying not to offend anyone, always reading others' tone and expressions in my interaction with them. This not only harmed Liu Xuan and delayed the work, but also made me feel stifled and miserable. Ultimately, I would only be spurned and eliminated by God. God likes honest people. He hopes that we can interact with others openly and sincerely, sharing our hearts with one another. Those who pursue the truth also prefer to associate with honest people. Living by satanic philosophies might temporarily help maintain relationships with people, but it's not sustainable at all. Ultimately, such people will be discerned and rejected by those who pursue and love the truth. Relying on these philosophies for worldly dealings, I not only failed to maintain my relationship with Liu Xuan, but also lost her trust. She ended up calling me a people pleaser, saying that I lacked a sincere heart in my interactions with others.

Reflecting on this, I realized how foolish I was to adopt these satanic philosophies as my way of dealing with the world. I saw how deeply I had been corrupted by Satan and realized that I indeed needed God's salvation. I decided to stop living such a selfish and deceitful life.

Later, I began to wonder: How should I get along with others? How should I speak and act to align with God's intention? I read a passage of God's words: **"What should the basis of people's speech and actions be? God's words. So, what are the requirements and standards God has for people's speech and actions? (That they be constructive to people.) That is right. Most fundamentally, you must tell the truth, speak honestly, and benefit others. At the very least, your speech must edify people, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, constrict them, expose their weaknesses, or hurt them. This is the expression of normal humanity. It is humanity's virtue. ... how is constructive speech expressed? It is mainly encouraging, orienting, guiding, exhorting, understanding, and comforting. Also, in some special instances, it becomes necessary to directly expose other people's errors and prune them, so that they gain knowledge of the truth and desire to repent. Only then is the due effect achieved. This way of practicing is of great benefit to people. It is a real help to them, and it is constructive for them, is it not? Say, for example, you are especially willful and arrogant. You've never been aware of this, but someone who knows you well comes right out and tells you the problem. You think to yourself, 'Am I willful? Am I arrogant? No one else dared to tell me, but he understands me. That he could say such a thing suggests that it really is true. I must spend some time reflecting on this.'**

these shortcomings and issues in me. Only you were able to tell me, to get personal with me. It was so great, such a big help to me.’ This is having a heart-to-heart, is it not? Little by little, the other person communicates to you what is on his mind, his thoughts about you, and his experiences of how he had notions, imaginings, negativity and weakness in this matter, and was able to escape it by seeking the truth. This is having a heart-to-heart; it is a communion of souls. And what, in sum, is the principle behind speaking? It is this: Say what’s in your heart, and speak of your true experiences and what you really think. These words are the most beneficial to people, they provide for people, they help them, they are positive” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). From God’s words, I understood that to establish a normal relationship with people, I must treat others according to the principles of God’s words. When I see someone reveal corruption, hinder work, or act against principles, I should point it out promptly. This will benefit both the work and that person’s life entry. Only by conducting myself this way can I uphold principles and live with openness and candor, and have humanity and a sense of justice. Sometimes, even though people can’t accept it immediately, if they pursue the truth, they will seek the truth and reflect upon themselves afterward. They will not feel disgusted or rejective, but will be grateful to me for their help. If they don’t pursue the truth or accept the truth, that will also reveal themselves and help me have some discernment. I shouldn’t focus solely on saving my own face. What I should care about is God’s attitude toward me, whether my actions satisfy God, and whether I adhere to principles and treat people according to the truth in God’s words. Reflecting on the past, I always interacted with people based on philosophies for worldly dealings. My words and actions were constantly constrained, and I lived in a state of repression without any

relief. This way, I would never be able to attain the truth, forever bound and enslaved by Satan. At this point, I understood that I should treat people according to God's words, interact with people frankly and honestly, speak from my heart, and say things that are beneficial to others. Whether I was pruning others, reproaching others, or calmly fellowshiping with them on the truth, I should approach them with my true heart. This way, my relationships with others can be normal and enduring, and I can get rid of my repression and gain release and freedom.

Later, when we discussed some issues in our videos, Liu Xuan would only share her opinions every time she pointed out others' problems. She rarely fellowshiped about principles. During gatherings, she seldom opened up about the corruptions she revealed, and rarely opened up to us about the problems she encountered in her work. This made others think she had stature and work capability before they knew it, and led them to look up to her. I felt this was detrimental to everyone and wanted to point it out to her. But when I was about to talk, I hesitated, thinking, "If I say this, will Liu Xuan get upset? If it has an impact on the relationship between us, will it make our future interactions difficult?" I realized that I was going to be a people pleaser again to maintain the relationship with others. So, I prayed to God immediately, asking for the strength to practice the truth and rebel against myself. After praying, I remembered a passage of God's words: **"If everyone talks about doctrinal or theoretical knowledge, but says nothing about the knowledge they have gained from actual experiences; and if, when fellowshiping the truth, they avoid talking about their personal lives, their real-life problems, and their own inner worlds, then how can genuine communication occur? How can there be any real trust? ... If people have no verbal or spiritual communication, then there is no possibility of intimacy between them, and they cannot**

provide for each other or help one another. You have experienced this, have you not? If your friend confides everything to you, giving voice to all that they are thinking and whatever suffering or happiness they harbor, then will you not feel especially close to them? The reason they are willing to tell you these things is because you have confided your innermost thoughts to them as well. You are particularly close, and it is because of this that you are able to get along so well and help each other out. Without this kind of communication and exchange between the brothers and sisters in the church, they would be unable to get along harmoniously, and would find it impossible to work well together while performing their duties. That's why fellowshipping the truth requires spiritual communication, and the ability to speak from the heart. This is one of the principles one must have in order to be an honest person" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). God's words woke me up. I thought about how by interacting with Liu Xuan based on philosophies for worldly dealings, I never truly opened my heart up to her or helped her, and never fellowshipped or pointed out her issues, and what I brought to her was deceit and harm, making people dislike me and God detest me. I realized that I couldn't continue being a selfish, deceitful people pleaser anymore, and that I had to be an honest person according to God's words and speak up about the issues I saw. The next day, when we communicated our states, I pointed out to Liu Xuan that she had never opened up about her corruptions, that she wasn't focusing on guiding everyone into principles in our duties, and that this could easily lead others to look up to her. Meanwhile, I warned her that doing duties like this was not the right path to walk. Liu Xuan realized the seriousness of her problem after listening, willing to seek the truth and reflect on herself. Later, Liu Xuan learned a

lesson from this experience. She began to focus more on communicating principles with us, and she frequently opened up about her corruptions. Our relationship didn't break because of this. Instead, we became closer to each other. Sometimes, when I couldn't see through my own state, communicating it with Liu Xuan helped me gain some understanding of myself. I genuinely felt that getting along with people and opening my heart to others according to God's words not only helped others but also benefited me. During that time, we made progress both in our life entry and in our technical skills. The effectiveness of our duties also improved, and we truly felt God's guidance. Reflecting on the past, getting along with Liu Xuan based on philosophies for worldly dealings made my life too painful and exhausting. I didn't fulfill my responsibilities to maintain church work, either. Comparing that to now, when being an honest person according to the word of God and speaking from my heart, I feel God's guidance and experience a sense of ease and release in my heart. There's a sweetness and joy that's hard to describe. I also understand that normal relationships among brothers and sisters should involve no suspicion or barriers. We should treat each other with sincerity, and help and support each other in life entry and duties. This benefits others, us, and church work. It is the word of God that has taught me how to get along with others, and I am truly grateful to God from the bottom of my heart.

89. Reflections on Not Accepting the Truth

A Letter to Ai Xi

By Shi Jing, China

Dear Ai Xi,

Long time no see! How've you been? We haven't seen each other for over a year, but it feels like what happened when we performed our duty together is still fresh in my mind. Because I didn't accept the truth, I hurt you, and we became estranged. Every time I think about it, I feel self-reproach. I really want to say "I'm sorry" to you. I'm writing this letter to tell you about my reflections and understanding.

Back then, we were responsible for watering work. Because I'd just started, I didn't know much about this duty and you helped me often. When you saw what I hadn't done well, you gave me pointers and reminders. I knew that this was you helping me. But as you pointed more things out to me, I felt uncomfortable. One time, the people doing watering duty weren't working well together so I had to write a letter to resolve the situation. I felt some disdain for them, and I chided them with an interrogative tone. Seeing this, you asked me what my mindset was when I wrote the letter, and frankly pointed out my problems. You said it wasn't right to write a letter that way, that I was acting superior, and that it would easily cause people to feel constrained. You told me to reflect on myself and amend my letter. Although I realized, too, that I was revealing an arrogant disposition, I kept reasoning against it in my heart, thinking, "How come every time I write a letter, you've got a problem with it? You make me look bad talking like that, like I can't even resolve such a simple problem. What will others think of me if they find out?" I couldn't accept it in my heart and became

prejudiced against you. I thought, too, that when I found a problem with you in the future, I'd point it out as well so that you wouldn't think I could be pushed around. One time, someone in charge of safeguarding books of God's word was irresponsible and took a slack attitude. You wrote him a letter, fellowshiping and dissecting the nature and consequences of such actions, using rather stern language. I seized on this issue and said the way you'd written wasn't right, that you were acting superior and chiding people, and that fellowshiping in that way made it hard for people to accept. You fellowshiped with me under what circumstances we could prune others, under what circumstances we could fellowship and help others, and said that this person understood everything, they were just irresponsible, and under such circumstances, we could prune them. I knew that what you said was right and beneficial to the work, but my heart wouldn't accept it. It felt like everything you said was right, and everything I did was wrong, and you were always finding fault with me. It seemed like I had to be more mindful in the future to avoid revealing any corruption or saying anything wrong, so you wouldn't expose me and embarrass me. From then on, I became hesitant and reserved in my duty and didn't feel any release in the slightest bit. I felt very weary inside. Normally, when you saw me being perfunctory in my duty, you'd point it out to me. And when I had a backlog of work that I hadn't dealt with in a timely manner, you'd say I was lazy and craved comforts, not bearing the burden of my duty. I knew that you were talking about my problems but every time my heart would seethe and I'd feel like you were always exposing my problems and talking so directly, not being tactful and considering my pride and feelings, putting me on the spot. I couldn't accept it in my heart. All I could do was hurriedly do my duty, feeling helpless and resistant, to avoid having you point out my

problems again. Because I hadn't sought the truth or reflected on myself, the problems in my duty never got resolved.

Later, there was one time when I wrote a letter communicating to the waterers about some deviations that needed correcting in the work. As I wrote, I saw that I wasn't expressing things clearly, but I couldn't be bothered to amend it. When you saw my letter, you pointed out my problems again, saying that I'd not explained things clearly, that you couldn't tell what problem I wanted to resolve. You asked me to carefully consider this and not be perfunctory, and fellowshiped with me in detail about how to write this letter. I felt resistance in my heart again, and thought, "Why are you always picking out my faults and making things hard for me? I never had this many problems when I wrote letters before, so how come you find so many things wrong? If the leader or brothers and sisters find out, what will they think of me? Will they think that I can't even resolve such small issues and that it was a mistake to choose me to be in charge of watering work? I don't know how to collaborate in this work anymore. You're always exposing my shortcomings and think little of me. So just do it yourself and you can write this letter yourself, too. It makes me feel so constrained to work with you!" The more I thought about this, the more upset I felt, and I even thought about getting you back, "If things don't work out, I'll write a letter to the leader reporting your problems and propose that I resign. That way, the leader will know that it's not me not doing the work, but that it's you being too arrogant that makes me unwilling to cooperate, and the leader will surely prune you. If I leave and the work is affected, then it'll be your transgression, and you'll feel guilt and self-reproach. That's what you get for always pointing out my problems!" I knew I shouldn't do this, as doing this was lacking humanity, but I couldn't help but feel prejudiced against you. At gatherings, I talked about what I'd

been revealing recently, but because I had no self-knowledge, behind everything I said was complaining and blaming, which made you feel constrained. I could feel you being very cautious when you spoke to me after that, worried to point out my problems in case I wouldn't accept it, so you did your best to fellowship with me tactfully. Because I had no self-knowledge, however, when you mentioned my problems again, I immediately clammed up and ignored you. One time, I didn't speak to you for more than a day, which caused delays to the work we needed to communicate about. I felt very stifled and in pain and went to the bathroom to cry. I saw you go to another room with a computer to work and knew that you were in a bad state too. The words "emotional abuse" came to my mind then, and I felt that this was how I was behaving, causing you pain. But I just couldn't rid myself of this state I was in, and I cried as I prayed to God, wanting to correct this state.

I read some of God's words at that time, and within it was a passage that moved me. God says: **"Some people say, 'Before being pruned, I felt like I had a path to follow, but after being pruned, I don't know what to do.' Why is it that they don't know what to do after being pruned? What's the reason for this? (When faced with pruning, they don't accept the truth or attempt to know themselves. They harbor some notions and don't seek the truth to resolve them. This leaves them without a path. Instead of finding the cause within themselves, they claim the opposite, that it was being pruned that caused them to lose their way.) Isn't this recrimination? It's like saying, 'What I did was in accordance with principles, but your pruning of me makes it clear that you're not letting me handle things according to principles. So, how am I supposed to practice in the future?' This is what people who say such things mean. Are they accepting being pruned? Do they accept the fact that they**

made mistakes? (No.) Doesn't this statement actually mean that they know how to recklessly commit misdeeds, but when pruned and asked to act according to principles, they don't know what to do and become confused? (Yes.) So, how did they do things before? When someone faces being pruned, isn't it because they didn't act according to principles? (Yes.) They recklessly commit misdeeds, don't seek the truth, and don't do things according to principles or the rules of God's house, so they receive pruning. The purpose of pruning is to enable people to seek the truth and act according to principles, to prevent them from recklessly committing misdeeds again. However, when faced with being pruned, those people say they don't know how to act or how to practice anymore—do these words contain any element of self-knowledge? (No.) They have no intention to know themselves or seek the truth. Instead, they imply: 'I used to do my duties very well, but since you pruned me, you've thrown my thoughts into disarray and confused my approach to my duties. Now my thinking is not normal, and I'm not as decisive or bold as I was before, I'm not as brave, and this is all due to being pruned. Since I was pruned, my heart has been deeply wounded. So, I must tell others to be very careful when doing their duties. They must not reveal their flaws or slip up; if they slip up, they'll be pruned, and then they'll become timid and lose the drive they once had. Their bold spirit will be significantly dulled, and their youthful courage and desire to give it their all will disappear, leaving them meekly wimpish, fearful of their own shadow, and feeling that nothing they do is right. They'll no longer feel God's presence in their hearts, and will feel increasingly distant from Him. Even praying and crying out to God will seem to go unanswered. They'll feel they don't have the same vitality, exuberance, and lovableness, and will even start

to look down on themselves.’ Are these the heartfelt words fellowshipped by someone with experience? Are they genuine? Do they edify or benefit people? Isn’t this just twisting facts? (Yes, these words are quite absurd.)” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (17)). After reading God’s words, I suddenly thought of my own behavior and revelations. I’d always thought that it was me who was constrained. I thought that I never had this many problems writing letters before, but now, with you, there seemed to be so many problems, and I didn’t know how to work together to do this work anymore—in fact, all these thoughts were distorted. When I wrote letters, I was revealing an arrogant disposition and constraining people. I was perfunctory when resolving problems, and was usually lazy and had no burden for my duty. By pointing out these problems to me, you were taking responsibility for the work and helping me, enabling me to reflect on and know my own issues in a timely manner, to do my duty in line with truth principles and achieve results in solving problems. But I didn’t accept it and instead thought that you pointing out my problems to get me to abandon my wrong ways of doing things made me feel constrained, and I became hesitant in my duty. I couldn’t write letters as well as before, and I didn’t know how to work together in my duty. The implication was that the way I was doing things was in line with the truth, that your guidance was wrong, and that if you’d let me do my duty as I wanted then I would do it just fine. I regarded your proper guidance as negative and my wrong ways of doing things as fine. I really wasn’t accepting the truth, I couldn’t tell positive from negative and was deaf to all reason!

I had only this superficial understanding at that time. Do you remember? We later opened up to each other and talked about our states. You said you hadn’t looked down on me and that it wasn’t that you were

giving me a hard time, and you said you didn't know how to communicate with me when I ignored you, that you felt it was really tough to do the duty this way, and even that you wanted to quit doing your duty here. Let me tell you, when I heard you say that, I felt all cut up inside. I never realized I'd made you feel so constrained and hurt. I always thought my humanity was fine, and that even if I revealed some corruption, I wouldn't constrain or hurt anyone. But this is how it was, and I had to face it and reflect on myself. I was reassigned to another duty over those two days and I left feeling guilty and regretful.

Later, I sought and reflected in order to understand my own problems. I read these words of God: **“With antichrists, when it comes to the matter of being pruned, they are unable to accept it. And there are reasons they are unable to accept it, the main one being that when they are pruned, they feel they have lost face, that they have lost their reputation, status and dignity, that they have been left unable to raise their heads in front of everyone. These things have an effect in their hearts, so they find it hard to accept being pruned, and they feel that whoever prunes them has it out for them and is their enemy. This is the mentality of antichrists when they are pruned. Of this, you can be sure. It is in pruning, in fact, that whether someone can accept the truth and whether someone can truly submit is most revealed. That antichrists are so resistant to pruning suffices to show that they are averse to the truth and do not accept it in the least. This, then, is the crux of the problem. Their pride is not the crux of the matter; not accepting the truth is the essence of the problem. When they are pruned, antichrists demand that it be done with a nice tone and attitude. If the doer's tone is serious and their attitude is severe, an antichrist will resist and be defiant, and grow furious from shame. They pay no mind to whether**

what is exposed in them is right or whether it is a fact, and they do not reflect on where they have erred or on whether they should accept the truth. They think only of whether their vanity and pride have suffered a blow. Antichrists are entirely unable to recognize that pruning is helpful to people, and loving, and salvific, that they are of benefit to people. They cannot even see this. Is this not a bit indiscriminating and unreasonable of them? So, when faced with being pruned, what disposition is it that an antichrist reveals? Without any doubt, that disposition is one of being averse to the truth, as well as one of arrogance and intransigence. This reveals that the nature essence of antichrists is one of being averse to the truth and hating it” (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). From what God’s words exposed I saw that when antichrists lose face from being guided, helped, and pruned by another, even when they know that what the other person is exposing is the truth, they never reflect on their own problems and believe that it’s the other person who is giving them a hard time, and so they feel hatred, aversion, and even want to get back at that person. I saw that the nature of an antichrist is averse to and hates the truth. Reading God’s words, I came to some understanding of the corrupt disposition I was revealing. I thought about how I was perfunctory and had no burden for my duty, how I wasn’t attentive when writing letters and didn’t express things clearly. You pointing problems out was so that I could quickly correct them, and this would have been beneficial to the work, but I just thought you were giving me a hard time and I refused to accept it in order to save face. I put the blame on you, wanting to run you down to the leader, and I even ignored you, causing you hurt and delaying work progress. Your help to me was always a positive thing and in accord with the truth and I should’ve accepted it and made swift corrections. Instead, I regarded your kind help as

belittlement, and this even gave rise to aversion, hatred, and the wish to get back at you. On the surface, I appeared to not accept your guidance, but in essence, I wasn't accepting positive things or the truth, I was in opposition to the truth, and this showed that I was fundamentally not someone who submitted to the truth. I didn't like you exposing my true situation. I loved being esteemed and praised. I saw that in my nature, I was vain, wicked, and didn't love the truth, and that I was walking the path of the antichrist. I was in such pain, living in my corrupt disposition, and this was nothing more than what I deserved! I thought of God's words: **"When a person is averse to the truth, this is undoubtedly fatal to their attaining salvation. This is not something that can or cannot be forgiven, it is not a form of behavior, or something that is fleetingly revealed in them. It is the nature essence of a person, and God is most sickened by such people"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Fulfill One's Duty Well, Understanding the Truth Is Most Crucial). I felt how God detested and hated those who were averse to the truth. I knew well that you pointing out my problems was in accord with the facts and in line with truth principles, but I wouldn't accept it, and instead I overanalyzed it, just like a disbeliever. By doing this, my corruption couldn't be resolved and I had no way to do my duty according to principles. All I would do was cause loss and bring obstacles to church work and make God detest me.

I read another passage of God's words and came to some understanding of the satanic poisons behind not accepting being pruned. God says: **"What should you do if someone keeps calling out your shortcomings? You might say, 'If you call me out, I'll call you out, too!' Is it good to target each other like that? Is that the way that people should comport themselves, act, and treat others? (No.) People may know that they should not do this as a matter of doctrine, yet many**

people still cannot overcome such temptations and snares. It may be that you haven't heard anyone calling out your shortcomings, or targeting you, or judging you behind your back—but when you do hear someone saying such things, you won't be able to bear it. Your heart will beat faster and your hot-headedness will come forth; you will say, 'How dare you call me out? If you are unkind to me, I'll do wrong to you! If you call out my shortcomings, don't think I won't call out your sore spots!' Others say, 'There's a saying that goes, "If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings," so I won't call out your shortcomings, but I'll find other ways to take care of you and take you down a peg. We'll see who's tough!' Are these methods good or not? (No.) For almost anyone, if they find out that someone has called them out, judged them, or said something bad about them behind their back, their first reaction will be one of anger. They will bristle with rage, unable to eat or sleep—and if they do manage to sleep, they will even be swearing in their dreams! Their impetuosity knows no bounds! It's such a trifling matter, yet they cannot get over it. This is the impact that impetuosity has on people, the evil results that come of corrupt dispositions. When a corrupt disposition becomes someone's life, where does it primarily show? It shows in that when the person encounters something they find disagreeable, that thing first affects their feelings, and then that person's impetuosity will burst forth. And as it does, the person will live in their impetuosity and regard the matter by dint of their corrupt disposition. The philosophical views of Satan will arise in their heart, and they will start considering which ways and means they will use to take their revenge, thereby laying bare their corrupt disposition. People's ideas and viewpoints on dealing with problems such as this,

and the ways and means that come to them, and even their feelings and impetuosity all come from corrupt dispositions. So, what are the corrupt dispositions that come up in this case? The first is certainly malice, followed by arrogance, deceit, wickedness, intransigence, aversion to the truth, and hatred of the truth. Of these corrupt dispositions, arrogance may be the least influential. What, then, are the corrupt dispositions that are most able to dominate a person's feelings and thoughts, and determine how they will ultimately deal with this matter? They are malice, intransigence, aversion to the truth, and hatred of the truth. These corrupt dispositions bind a person in a death grip, and it is obvious that they are living in Satan's net. How does Satan's net arise? Is it not corrupt dispositions that give rise to it? Your corrupt dispositions have woven all kinds of satanic nets for you. For instance, when you hear that someone is doing something like judging you, cursing you, or calling out your shortcomings behind your back, you let satanic philosophies and corrupt dispositions be your life and dominate your thoughts, your views, and your feelings, thus engendering a sequence of actions. These corrupt actions are mainly the result of your having a satanic nature and disposition. Whatever your circumstances may be, as long as you are bound, controlled, and dominated by Satan's corrupt disposition, everything you live out, everything you reveal, and everything you display—or your feelings, your thoughts and views, and your ways and means of doing things—are all satanic. All of these things violate the truth and are hostile to the words of God and the truth. The further removed you are from the word of God and the truth, the more controlled and ensnared you are by Satan's net. If instead, you can break free from the fetters and control of your corrupt dispositions, and rebel against them, come

before God, and act and resolve problems with the methods and principles of which God's words tell you, then you will gradually break free from Satan's net. After breaking free, what you then live out is no longer the same old likeness of a satanic person who is controlled by their corrupt dispositions, but that of a new person who takes God's words as their life. Your whole way of living changes. But if you give in to the feelings, thoughts, views, and practices that satanic dispositions give rise to, then you will adhere to a litany of satanic philosophies and various techniques, such as 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings,' 'It is never too late for a gentleman to take his revenge,' 'Better to be a true villain than a fake gentleman,' 'He who does not seek revenge is not a man.' These will be in your heart, dictating your actions. If you take these satanic philosophies as the basis for your actions, the character of your actions will change, and you will be doing evil, and resisting God. If you take these negative thoughts and viewpoints as the basis for your actions, it is obvious that you have strayed far from God's teachings and words, and that you have fallen into Satan's net and cannot extricate yourself' (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). Having read God's words, I understood that Satan indoctrinates people with its satanic philosophies like "If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings," "If you're unkind, I won't be fair," and "Here's a taste of your own medicine." They incite people to act impetuously, saying that whoever harms one's reputation and interests must be paid back in kind. This causes people to fight, attack, and hurt each other. People therefore become more and more vicious and sinister, and they lose their normal humanity. I saw that I was living constantly by these satanic poisons. When I heard anyone

exposing my corruption and problems, I didn't accept it humbly but instead revealed hotheadedness and treated them coldly and hostilely. Just like those times, I regarded your guidance and help as something negative, believing that you were exposing my shortcomings and harming my reputation and interests, so I turned it around and fixated on your problems, and said that your pruning, which accorded with principles, was you acting superior, and I even wanted the leader to prune you and I wanted to make you feel self-reproach and guilt by resigning my post. I pretended to be a victim and intentionally ignored and ostracized you. My goal was to make you stop talking about my problems, thereby protecting my reputation and interests. I really was like an angry bear that no one dares to poke, without a shred of humanity or reason! When pointing out my problems, you even had to look at what my expression was and felt constrained by me, wanting to escape this situation and not do your duty anymore, and eventually the work was delayed. In what way was my action something a human would do? This was me doing evil and resisting God! I was disgusted by my own behaviors and my heart filled with self-hatred. I was living by satanic poisons and had become arrogant, vicious, and selfish. Not only did I hurt you, but I committed transgressions and caused myself regret—I really was harming both myself and others! I thought about how some antichrists react when brothers and sisters who pursue the truth with a sense of justice give suggestions to them and expose the things they do that are at odds with truth principles, which affects their reputation and status. They feel aversion and resistance and are shamed into anger. They distort facts and put the blame on the brothers and sisters, suppressing and tormenting those with a sense of justice, in order to shore up their position. Their actions harm brothers and sisters, disturb, disrupt, and destroy church work, and offend God's disposition, leading to their expulsion from the church. Was the

nature of my behavior not like this? I saw how conducting myself and acting by my satanic disposition was really causing God to detest me, and that if I didn't repent, then sooner or later I'd end up doing evil things that destroy and disturb church work just like antichrists and evil people, and thus offending God's disposition and being eliminated by God—I really was in such danger! Thinking this, I felt afraid and filled with remorse, and was willing to come before God to repent and confess.

I then began to seek the path of practice and saw a passage of God's words: **“What should you do if you wish to give the path of an antichrist a wide berth? You should take the initiative to draw close to people who love the truth, people who are upright, get close to people who can point out your issues, who can speak truthfully and reproach you when they discover your problems, and especially people who can prune you when they discover your problems—these are the people who are most beneficial to you, and you should cherish them. If you exclude and get rid of such good people, then you will lose God's protection, and disaster will gradually come to you. By getting close to good people and people who understand the truth, you will have peace and joy, and you will be able to keep disaster at bay; by getting close to vile people, shameless people, and people who flatter you, you will be in danger. Not only will you be easily duped and tricked, but disaster may come upon you at any time. You must know what kind of person can benefit you the most—it is those who can warn you when you do something wrong, or when you exalt and testify about yourself and mislead others, that can benefit you the most. Getting close to such people is the correct path to take”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves). From reading God's words, I found the path of practice. I should draw close to those who guide and help me, and not avoid them. I

thought about how you had no evil intentions when you pointed out my problems. Even though you sometimes spoke frankly, what you said was factual and accorded with principles, so I shouldn't have reacted impetuously. Even if I couldn't accept it or didn't understand it at the time, I should have had a truth-seeking heart, pondered what would be beneficial to the work of God's house and then done that, minimizing problems and deviations. I thought about how I didn't have a sense of burden in my duty, how I had a tendency to sound superior when writing letters, how I didn't consider the other person's real difficulties and feelings, and how perfunctory and inattentive I was. You pointing out my problems and exposing my corrupt dispositions was you helping me reflect on myself, and it would be helpful for me to do my duty in a serious and attentive way and to achieve results. I should have thanked you and accepted your supervision and help more. You pointing out my problems was positive and it restrained me, otherwise I would've lived within my corrupt dispositions without knowing it, I would've carried on doing my duty perfunctorily and without a sense of burden, causing losses to the work, and I would've become an untrustworthy person detested by God. Realizing this, I consciously turned myself around and started to have more of a sense of burden in my duty than before. When problems arose, I focused on approaching them without relying on hotheadedness or my arrogant disposition, and I pondered how to fellowship in a way that would bring results. I felt much steadier in my heart by practicing in this way. I also truly felt that by being able to let go of reputation and accept and submit to the truth, one can truly have integrity, dignity, humanity, and reason. If one is averse to the truth, not only does one have no understanding of the truth, but one can't do one's duty well either and is detested by God. Conducting oneself this way makes one so lowly and worthless.

Later, when working together in my duty with other brothers and sisters, I would still reveal these corrupt dispositions, and then I would consciously pray to God, relinquish myself, accept the guidance and help of others, and practice entry. Gradually, these dispositions weren't as serious as they had been before. I felt that adopting other people's suggestions was indeed a great help and was beneficial to the work. I felt steady and free in my heart, and that this was a great way to practice. Thinking back over these things, I feel so grateful to God. Without God revealing me in this way and the judgment and revelation of His words, I'd simply have no self-knowledge at all and wouldn't be able to see that I'd been corrupted so much by Satan that my disposition had become vicious and averse to the truth. When my interests were affected, I'd vent my anger in my duty, showing no submission to God at all and living without any human likeness. I was so filthy and corrupt with bad humanity, yet God didn't eliminate me for this, but instead, He still gave me a chance to reflect and repent so that I'd know how to conduct myself. He led me little by little to understand and accept the truth, and I thank God from the bottom of my heart. Though I'm still very corrupt and possess many deficiencies, I'm willing to pursue the truth and resolve my corruption. I thank God for His guidance and salvation!

Anyway, that's all I wanted to say for now. If you think there's anything that I haven't understood, please do let me know, as that would be a great help to me.

Sincerely,

Shi Jing

September 19, 2023

90. Embracing My Duty Without Fear

By Song Wen, China

At the end of May 2023, the churches I was responsible for faced arrests from the CCP, and the books of God's words needed to be transferred quickly. After the upper leadership learned about this, they instructed me and Sister Song En to urgently coordinate the transfer of the books. However, during the transfer, we were being surveilled by the police, and the police seized all the books. When I heard the news, I couldn't believe it and I felt like I'd fallen into a pit of despair. As a church leader, I'd failed to protect the books of God's words and caused a huge loss. This was an absolute disaster. I was dumbfounded. While I was worried about being dismissed, I was even more concerned that I might lose the chance to do my duties altogether, and if that happened, wouldn't I completely lose my chance for salvation? Just thinking about it made my heart lurch with anxiety. I'd often sigh in despair, and when I thought about how great a transgression I'd committed, I'd feel really negative, and only forced myself to do my duties. One day, while chatting with Sister Song En, we talked about Ye Qian's neglect of her duty while she was a leader, which had led to many books of God's words being seized by the police and to her being cleared out. My thoughts became even heavier, as I thought about how I was also a church leader, who was directly responsible for the transfer of the books, and so I undoubtedly had the largest responsibility for all this. It seemed certain that I was going to be dismissed. If I had known this day would come, I would have preferred not to have been made a leader so I wouldn't have to bear such a weighty responsibility. During that period of time, whenever I thought about this, I felt despondent, and I found myself constantly filled with a sense of desolation. Although I didn't appear

to give up, just thinking about possibly being dismissed made me lose my sense of burden for my duties, and I ended up just going through the motions.

By mid-July, the upper leadership had looked into the situation regarding the seized books, and said it was a special circumstance that we couldn't have anticipated, and that it wasn't caused by human error, so they didn't hold us accountable for this, and just reminded us to be earnest in summarizing our experiences and the lessons we learned and diligently do our duties moving forward. Although I knew I should cherish my duty, I still thought, "This was an unexpected incident, and they didn't hold me responsible, but being a leader involves a lot of work, and carries huge responsibilities. If I mishandle issues in the future and cause significant losses, I might be dismissed at the very least, or at worst, cleared out. That'd mean I'd lose all hope of salvation." With this in mind, I wanted to switch to a duty that carried less responsibility and give up my leadership role. But I knew that in giving up my duty, I would be betraying God, and that this was an even worse problem. Thinking rationally, I forced myself to submit and continue cooperating. At the beginning of August, during the church election for preachers, I heard that some brothers and sisters wanted to nominate me and Sister Gu Nan, and my heart suddenly sank, and my worries surged, "I'm already responsible for one church, and this involves taking on a lot of responsibility. If I'm elected as a preacher and made to supervise multiple churches, wouldn't that involve even greater responsibility and danger? What if I don't do the work well and cause significant losses? If I'm cleared out because of this, wouldn't I have no good outcome and destination?" With this in mind, I was terrified of being elected. I realized that not addressing my state was dangerous and affecting my performance of my duty, so I began to seek answers in God's words.

One day during my devotionals, I came across a passage of God's words: **"You came to do your duty. No matter how hard you work, or how much you suffer, or how much you are pruned, you should thank God. God gave you this opportunity so that you could experience all manner of different situations and come to have all kinds of personal experiences and encounters. This is a good thing, and it is all done so you can understand the truth. So, what are you worried about? Who are you guarding against? There's no need to be like that. Just pursue the truth normally, find your correct place, and do your duty and the work that falls to you well, and that's enough. This is not much to ask of you"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). **"Don't keep thinking about leaving, you need to single-mindedly put down roots here and do your duty well. No matter whether you can do your duty well or not, at least put your heart into it, and make sure that you've completed all of your tasks in the end. Don't be a deserter. Some people say, 'My caliber is poor, I'm not very educated and I have no talent. I have faults in my personality and I always encounter difficulties in my duty. What will I do if I can't do my duty well and get replaced?' What are you afraid of? Can this work be completed by you alone? You've just taken on a role, you're not being asked to take on the whole thing. Just take on the things you ought to do, that's enough. Won't you then have fulfilled your responsibilities? It's so simple; why are you always so wary? You're afraid that falling leaves will hit your head and crack it open, and you think about your own contingency plans first and foremost—isn't this good for nothing? What does 'good for nothing' mean? It means not trying to make progress, not being willing to give it your all, always wanting to get a free meal ticket and enjoy good things—people like this are trash. Some**

people are too small-minded. How can we describe such people? (They are extremely petty.) An extremely petty person is a vile person, and any vile person can measure the character of a gentleman by their own vile standards and regard others to be just as selfish and despicable as themselves. These people are good-for-nothings, and even if they believe in God, it won't be easy for them to accept the truth. What causes a person to have too little faith? It is caused by them not understanding the truth. If you understand too few truths and your understanding of them is too shallow, and you consequently cannot understand every work God undertakes, everything God does, and every requirement God has of you, if you cannot attain this understanding, then all kinds of suspicions, imaginings, misunderstandings, and notions will arise in you regarding God. If your heart is filled with nothing but these things, can you have true faith in God? You have no true faith in God, and that's why you always feel uneasy, and worry about not knowing when you might be replaced. You feel afraid and think, 'God could come here at any time to carry out an inspection.' Just relax. As long as you do the work God's house entrusts to you well, then even if you're somewhat lacking in your pursuit of the truth and life entry, I'll let it slide" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). After reading God's words, I felt deeply touched, as if God was speaking directly to me. I felt an indescribable feeling of being touched to my core. God scrutinizes every thought and idea of mine, and He knew that I didn't understand the principles of how the church handles people, and that I was always being guarded and misunderstanding, so He used His words to enlighten and guide me, earnestly telling me not to worry or be afraid, and that His house handles people with principles, and won't arbitrarily clear out any genuine

believer performing their duties. God encourages us not to be afraid to take on responsibilities, and to face each day's situations calmly, seeking the truth to understand His intentions. God's requirements for me aren't high. He just hopes that I can shoulder the responsibilities I ought to and be loyal in my duty, and be an honest person with humanity. God doesn't want me to live in fear and anxiety, feeling disturbed. But I was too deceitful, and after the incident of the books of God's words being seized, I kept worrying that I would be dismissed, or even cleared out, and that I would lose my hope of having a good outcome and destination. Later, when God's house didn't hold me responsible, instead of being grateful for God's mercy and doing my duties to repay His love, I became guarded and misunderstood Him, becoming more afraid of doing my leadership duties, and wanting to switch to a "safer" duty. Furthermore, during the church election for preachers, before I was even elected, I started worrying that with a greater scope of supervision, I would have greater responsibilities and be revealed more quickly, so I didn't want to participate in the election. I kept suspecting and guarding against Him. I was being so deceitful!

Later, I continued to read God's words to resolve my problems. I came across a passage of God's words: **"Some people are afraid of shouldering responsibility while performing their duty. If the church gives them a job to do, they will first consider whether the job requires them to shoulder responsibility, and if it does, they will not accept the job. Their conditions for performing a duty are, first, that it must be a slack job; second, that it is not busy or tiring; and third, that no matter what they do, they do not shoulder any responsibility. This is the only kind of duty they take on. What sort of a person is this? Is this not a slippery, deceitful person? They do not want to shoulder even the smallest amount of responsibility. They even fear that leaves will break their**

skull when they fall from trees. What duty can a person like this perform? What use could they have in the house of God? The work of the house of God has to do with the work of battling Satan, as well as spreading the kingdom gospel. What duty does not entail responsibilities? Would you say that being a leader carries responsibility? Are their responsibilities not all the greater, and must they not bear responsibility all the more? Regardless of whether you spread the gospel, testify, make videos, and so on—no matter what work you do—so long as it pertains to the truth principles, it carries with it responsibilities. If the performance of your duty is unprincipled, it will affect the work of God's house, and if you are afraid of shouldering responsibility, then you cannot perform any duty. Is someone who fears taking on responsibility in performing their duty cowardly, or is there a problem with their disposition? You must be able to tell the difference. The fact is that this is not an issue of cowardice. If that person were after wealth, or they were doing something in their own interest, how could they be so brave? They would take on any risk. But when they do things for the church, for God's house, they take on no risk at all. Such people are selfish and vile, the most treacherous of all. Anyone who does not take on responsibility in performing a duty is not the least bit sincere to God, to say nothing of their loyalty. What sort of person dares to take on responsibility? What sort of person has the courage to bear a heavy burden? Someone who takes the lead and goes bravely forth at the most crucial moment in the work of God's house, who is not afraid to bear a heavy responsibility and endure great hardship when they see the work that is most important and crucial. That is someone loyal to God, a good soldier of Christ. Is it the case that everyone who fears

taking on responsibility in their duty does so because they do not understand the truth? No; it is a problem in their humanity. They have no sense of justice or responsibility, they are selfish and vile people, not true-hearted believers in God, and they do not accept the truth in the least. For this reason, they cannot be saved. ... If you protect yourself whenever something befalls you and leave yourself an escape route, a back door, are you putting the truth into practice? This is not practicing the truth—it is being sneaky. You are performing your duty in the house of God now. What is the first principle of performing a duty? It is that you must first perform that duty with your whole heart, sparing no effort, and protect the interests of God’s house. This is a truth principle, one that you should put into practice. Protecting oneself by leaving oneself an escape route, a back door, is the principle of practice followed by nonbelievers, and their most elevated philosophy. Considering oneself first in all things and placing one’s own interests before all else, not thinking of others, having no connection with the interests of God’s house and the interests of others, thinking of one’s own interests first and then thinking of an escape route—is that not what a nonbeliever is? This is precisely what a nonbeliever is. This sort of person is not fit to perform a duty” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God exposes that human nature is really selfish, despicable, deceitful, and treacherous, that regardless of the duty, people consider their own interests first, and that they are willing to take on responsibilities for tasks that benefit them, but reluctant to take on tasks that bear responsibilities or risks. Reflecting on myself in light of God’s words, I saw that my behavior in this regard was particularly obvious. For example, when the books of God’s words were seized, I didn’t think about how to compensate for the losses to

the interests of God's house, but instead, I regretted that if I'd known I'd have had to take on such a huge responsibility, I wouldn't have taken on the leadership duty. Although I didn't seem to be shirking my duties, I felt really despondent. It was just because I was afraid of betraying God and of having no good outcome or destination that I didn't dare to give up my duties. I realized that I was being utterly selfish and despicable, not at all a person who loves God or is loyal to Him. Furthermore, after learning that God's house wasn't holding me responsible for these things, not only did I not cherish my duties, but I became even more guarded against God and misunderstood Him. I was like a startled bird, already thinking of shirking my duties before they'd even come upon me. I only had my own interests in mind, not considering at all whether my behaviors were in line with principles or what would happen to the church's work. I was behaving just like a disbeliever. How could I expect to be saved believing like this? I was constantly guarded against God and unwilling to bear responsibilities, and had long since placed myself outside of God's house. It wasn't that God wanted to eliminate me, but rather that I was bringing about my own elimination. Thinking about this made me realize just how serious my problem was, so I silently prayed to God, "God, I'm constantly thinking about my own interests and trying to leave myself room to maneuver. I've been so deceitful. God, I now know I was wrong, and from now on, regardless of whether I'll be elected as a preacher, I am willing to submit. Please guide me to reflect and know myself more deeply."

Later, while watching an experiential testimony video, I came across a passage of God's words, which gave me further understanding of my problems. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists harbor these things in their hearts, all of which are misunderstandings, opposition, judgment, and resistance against God. They lack any knowledge of God's work**

whatsoever. While prying into God's words, prying into God's disposition, identity, and essence, they come to such conclusions. Antichrists bury these things deep in their hearts, admonishing themselves: 'Caution is the parent of safety; it's best to fly under the radar; the bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot; and it's lonely at the top! No matter when, never be that bird sticking its head out, never climb too high; the higher you climb, the harder you fall.' They do not believe that the words of God are the truth, and they do not believe that His disposition is righteous and holy. They regard all this through human notions and imaginings, and they approach the work of God with human perspectives, human thoughts, and human guile, employing the logic and thinking of Satan to delineate God's disposition, identity, and essence. Obviously, not only do antichrists neither accept nor acknowledge God's disposition, identity, and essence; on the contrary they are full of notions, opposition, and rebelliousness toward God and have not the least shred of real knowledge of Him. Antichrists' definition of God's work, God's disposition, and God's love is a question mark—dubiousness, and they are full of skepticism and full of denial and slander for it; so what, then, of His identity? God's disposition represents His identity; with such a regard of God's disposition as theirs, their regard of God's identity is self-evident—direct denial. This is the essence of antichrists"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part Six)). God exposes that antichrists deny the essence of God, and that they are filled with suspicions toward and deny and slander God. Antichrists don't believe that God is righteous, nor that what God does for humanity is love and salvation. I also had a serious antichrist disposition. Just like after the books of God's words

were seized this time, I always lived in a state of negativity and worry, fearing that I would be cleared out of the church and have no good outcome or destination. Later, when I heard that Ye Qian had been cleared out for neglecting her duties and causing significant losses to God's house, I felt that the duty of a preacher involved immense responsibilities, and I kept being guarded and misunderstanding, afraid of being chosen as a preacher, without ever even seeking the context or principles that God's house applies when dealing with people. As I saw it, God's house was just like the world of nonbelievers, lacking in fairness and righteousness, and the greater the duty I did, the greater the responsibility I bore, and therefore the more severe the consequences that would befall me if I mishandled situations. I lived by fallacious beliefs like, "It's lonely at the top," "The bigger they are, the harder they fall," constantly second-guessing and guarding against God in every situation. This showed a lack of understanding of God's righteous disposition and was a form of blasphemy against God. In reality, Ye Qian was cleared out mainly because she neglected her duty, as this had caused many books of God's words to be seized by the CCP police, resulting in significant losses for God's house. My not being dealt with this time was mainly because the church considered that the losses weren't due to anyone being perfunctory or irresponsible, so nobody was held responsible for it. This showed that God's house really assesses matters based on context and the reasons behind the losses when assigning responsibility. But I failed to seek the truth principles, and when I saw Ye Qian was cleared out, I misunderstood God, as if making a mistake in my duties and bringing about negative consequences would lead to my being cleared out and eliminated. My thoughts were all filled with doubt and denial of God's righteousness. Even though I guarded against and misunderstood God, God didn't focus on my shortcomings and corruption and still gave me the chance to perform

my duties, using people, events, and things to remind me to reflect on and know myself so I could awaken and turn back in time, avoiding going further down the path of an antichrist. Thinking of this made me feel really guilty and indebted to God. I felt God's sincere desire to save people and hated my own selfishness and deceitfulness even more. I no longer wanted to live in a state of being guarded and having misunderstanding, and if I was elected I was willing to accept this duty. Later, I was elected as a preacher, but I still felt somewhat worried, as I felt I didn't grasp many of the principles and that my corrupt disposition was quite serious, and now that I was responsible for several churches, I felt that if I made a mistake and caused losses to the church's work, I would lose my chance for a good outcome and destination. But by looking back on my experiences during this time, I realized that as long as I could accept the truth, even if I transgressed, as long as I sincerely repented, God wouldn't condemn and eliminate me due to my momentary transgression. Understanding this, I became willing to put myself aside and submit, and accept this duty calmly.

Later, I read some more of God's words: **“Man's performance of his duty is, in actuality, the accomplishment of all that is inherent within man, which is to say, that which is possible for man. It is then that his duty is fulfilled. The defects of man during his service are gradually reduced through progressive experience and the process of his undergoing judgment; they do not hinder or affect man's duty. Those who cease to serve or yield and fall back for fear that there may be drawbacks to their service are the most cowardly of all. ... There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he receives blessings or suffers misfortune. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. Receiving**

blessings refers to when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. Suffering misfortune refers to when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment; they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they receive blessings or suffer misfortune, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to receive blessings, and you should not refuse to act for fear of suffering misfortune. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness" (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). After reading God's words, I realized that I was always afraid of taking on responsibilities, afraid of taking risks and being eliminated, and this was mainly because of my overwhelming desire for blessings, and because I always linked my duty to my outcome and destination. Through the exposure of God's words, I understood that doing my duty has nothing to do with gaining blessings or suffering. Duties are the responsibilities of created beings, and these are the responsibilities and obligations that people should fulfill. In the course of our duties, we also come to know both ourselves and God, and gain the truth. Just like in this experience, I realized that a leadership duty comes with significant responsibilities, and handling aftermath work requires more than just urgency and speed, and it also requires one to act with principles, to have wisdom, and to pray and seek more. Additionally, through this revelation, I realized that I'd been truly selfish, despicable, deceitful, and treacherous, and when faced with situations, I always considered my own interests,

walking the path of opposing God. All of this was gained through doing my duty. If I link my duty with gaining blessings or suffering, then when I encounter issues, I will hesitate and want to give up my duty, and this will lead me to miss many opportunities to gain the truth. That would truly be a case of not eating for fear of choking, anyone who does this is utterly foolish and cowardly. Having realized this, I no longer rejected my duty because of my shortcomings, and instead approached my duty with an honest heart. After that, I focused on identifying issues in my duties and on seeking the truth to resolve them. Although my understanding of the truth was shallow, I was able to make up for my shortcomings by talking things through with everyone. Sometimes, when faced with things I couldn't understand, I brought these issues to the fore and sought solutions along with everyone, and when I was uncertain of something, I'd seek guidance from upper leadership. If we had any deviations, we'd correct them promptly, and if we failed, we summarized these failures. In doing my duty this way, I didn't feel too much pressure and felt much more at ease. Through this experience, I came to realize that only by focusing on seeking the truth, submitting to the situations God orchestrates, and learning lessons from these things can one gain true freedom and liberation.

91. Pursue the Truth Regardless of Age

By Liu Lei, China

These years I've struggled with high blood pressure and poor health, spent a lot of time resting at home, and just did some duties I am capable of. In July of 2022, our watering supervisor heard that I used to water newcomers and assigned me to watering duty. I was so excited to be doing this duty again and I was determined to do my duty well. When I saw that the two supervisors were around thirty years old, of good caliber, and learned the principles quickly, and that Sister Xin Xin was energetic and a quick study, I couldn't be happier in my heart. I was sixty years old, and still had the opportunity to do my duty with these young brothers and sisters—I felt like it made me younger as well. I would ride my bike to the gatherings I hosted for newcomers, and was always humming hymns as I walked along—I was really enthusiastic about my duty. After some time, I felt I'd grown both in my understanding of principle and in my progress in life. I liked this duty even more.

But in the wake of my excitement, some new issues arose. My blood pressure was really high, I was in poor health, and I would feel exhausted after a day of work, wanting nothing more than to lie down and rest. Xin Xin and the others could continue summarizing the aberrations in their duty after gatherings, and make arrangements for the following day. I wanted to get more done like my younger co-workers, but soon after dinner, I'd feel drowsy and start to doze off, so I'd end up going to bed early. At one point, I hadn't gotten good sleep for three days in a row, and my body just couldn't handle it. I knew I couldn't do my duty properly, so I had to ask Xin Xin to host a gathering in my place. I felt quite dejected after that—I couldn't even do my regular duties and had to ask someone else to help; it

seemed likely I'd be dismissed soon. Sometimes when our supervisor would fellowship on principles for watering newcomers and good paths of practice, Xin Xin and the others would get it right away, be able to apply the principles in different situations and use them practically in their duties, whereas I would have to ponder them over for quite some time, and sometimes needed the supervisor to fellowship with me further. During that time, I always felt uneasy and couldn't get a peaceful night's rest. I worried that due to my advanced age, my poor health, how slow I picked up on things and my forgetfulness, if there came a day when I could no longer do my duty, would that be the end of the road for me as a believer? Would I still be able to attain salvation? I constantly felt despondent, and couldn't focus on my duty. I wasn't doing nearly as well as Xin Xin in my duty. I disliked feeling old, defined myself as being old and useless, and was always worried that I'd be reassigned. I envied all those young people, and thought how great it would be if I could just turn back the clock twenty years and regain some youthful vitality! Then I could expend myself for God until the end, and wouldn't there be hope for me to enter God's kingdom? When I thought of these things, I couldn't help but worry about my destination.

One day, my leader visited me where I was staying and said to me, "On account of your advanced age and high blood pressure, we're reassigning you to general affairs, that way you won't have to run around all the time." I had a hard time accepting the news—I really liked my watering duty and had never thought of giving it up, but now I was suddenly being reassigned. I was getting older and older, and I'd be even less likely to be able to do watering in the future. It felt like someone had poured a bucket of cold water on my head, extinguishing that fire of enthusiasm in my heart. My brothers and sisters read me God's words and

fellowshipped His intention to me, but I wasn't listening. Sitting there, I felt paralyzed and could barely sit up straight. That night, I lay in my bed, tossing and turning. I thought of how energetic and full of vitality the young brothers and sisters were, how quickly they understood the truth and principles, and thought they were worthy of being cultivated—these youngsters had their whole futures ahead of them. Whereas for an old person like me, my health prevented me from expending myself for God, I was slow in my understanding, and wasn't that worthy of being cultivated. God certainly didn't look well on an old person like me, and it was unclear if I would have a good destination. If only I was just twenty years younger and could devote myself entirely to expending myself for God! The more I thought, the worse I felt; I was really depressed. It felt like there was a heavy stone weighing on my chest, my chest felt so tight I could barely breathe. I was so distressed by being reassigned that I couldn't get a wink of sleep all night.

There happened to be a watering workers gathering the next day, and I saw the supervisor, Zhao Liang, ride by the house where I was staying. Seeing him riding to the gathering was a real gut punch. If I hadn't been reassigned, I'd be going there with him, but now that ship had sailed. Why did I have to be old and sick? Thinking of all that, I felt so empty inside and didn't know what I'd do going forward. I sat there idly on my stool, staring out at the sky through the window. My prospects as a believer, I thought, were not good and I had no hope of entering God's kingdom. The more I thought, the worse I felt, and tears came streaming down my face. So, I prayed to God, "O God! I haven't been able to truly submit to and accept this reassignment. I know this is being rebellious toward You and makes You disgusted. O God! Please guide me to know myself and submit." Later on, Zhao Liang saw I was in a bad state, and read me a passage of God's

words. Almighty God says: **“You should learn to obey when your duty is adjusted. After you have trained in your new duty for a while and have achieved results in performing it, you’ll find that you are more suited to performing this duty, and you’ll realize that choosing duties based on your own preferences was a mistake. Doesn’t this resolve the issue? Most importantly, the house of God arranges for people to perform certain duties not based on people’s preferences, but based on the needs of the work and whether someone’s performing that duty can achieve results. Would you say that the house of God should arrange duties based on individual preferences? Should it use people based on the condition of satisfying their personal preferences? (No.) Which of these aligns with the principles of the house of God in utilizing people? Which aligns with the truth principles? It is choosing people according to the needs of the work in God’s house and the results of people performing their duties. You have some penchants and interests, and you have a bit of a wish to perform your duties, but should your wishes, interests, and penchants take precedence over the work of the house of God? If you doggedly insist, saying, ‘I must do this work; if I’m not allowed to do it, I don’t want to live, I don’t want to perform my duty. If I’m not allowed to do this work, I won’t have enthusiasm for doing anything else, nor will I give my full effort to it,’ doesn’t this show there is a problem with your attitude toward performing duty? Isn’t that completely lacking in conscience and reason? In order to satisfy your personal wishes, interests, and penchants, you do not hesitate to affect and delay the work of the church. Does this accord with the truth? How should one treat things that do not accord with the truth? Some people say: ‘One should sacrifice the individual self for the sake of the collective self.’ Is this correct? Is this the truth? (No.) What kind of**

statement is this? (It's a satanic fallacy.) This is a fallacious statement, a misleading and disguised one. If you apply the phrase 'One should sacrifice the individual self for the sake of the collective self' to the context of performing your duties, then you are opposing and blaspheming God. Why does this blaspheme God? Because you are imposing your own will onto God, and that is blasphemy! You are trying to exchange the sacrifice of your individual self for God's perfection and blessings; your intention is to make a deal with God. God does not need you to sacrifice anything of yourself; what God demands is that people practice the truth and rebel against the flesh. If you can't practice the truth, then you are rebelling against and opposing God. You performed your duty poorly because your intentions were wrong, your views on things were incorrect, and your statements completely contradicted the truth. But the house of God has not stripped you of the right to perform a duty; it's just that your duties were adjusted because you were not suited for the last one, and you were reassigned to a duty that is suitable for you. This is very normal and easy to understand. You should treat this matter correctly"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status or No Hope of Gaining Blessings). After reading the passage, Zhao Liang offered this fellowship: "When God's house reassigns people, it is not depriving them of the chance to do their duty and be saved, but is just making reasonable arrangements based on the church's needs. You've been feeling unwell, you're more advanced in age and have high blood pressure. If something happened to you while riding to do your duty or on the way to various gatherings, it would not only be bad for the church, but for you as well. It's best for you to return to your home church and do your duty there. Let's first submit, accept it from God and learn a lesson." I felt so ashamed

after hearing Zhao Liang's fellowship. Even after believing in God for so long, I still didn't submit in the slightest. I liked doing my watering duty and was as enthusiastic as the youngsters, but seeing as I was over sixty years old and had fallen ill, I just didn't have the energy, memory or ability to learn new things that they had. If I was allowed to continue watering, it would negatively affect the results of watering newcomers. The church had reassigned me to a more suitable duty based on the results of my work and my health issues. I had to be reasonable and accept and submit. So, I prayed to God, saying I was willing to submit to His arrangements, and would do my best to cooperate in my new duty.

Later on, I started wondering: Why didn't I submit when I was reassigned? Why did I become so despondent? In my seeking, I came upon this passage of God's words: **"There are also elderly people among brothers and sisters, who are aged from 60 up to around 80 or 90 and who, because of their advanced age, also experience some difficulties. Despite their age, their thinking is not necessarily so correct or rational, and their ideas and views do not necessarily accord with the truth. These elderly people have problems just the same, and they're always worrying, 'My health isn't so good anymore and I'm limited as to what duty I can perform. If I just perform this little duty, will God remember me? Sometimes I get sick, and I need someone to look after me. When there's no one to look after me, I'm not able to perform my duty, so what can I do? I'm old and I don't remember God's words when I read them and it's hard for me to understand the truth. When fellowshipping on the truth, I speak in a muddled and illogical way, and I haven't any experiences worth sharing. I'm old and I don't have enough energy, my eyesight isn't very good and I'm not strong anymore. Everything is difficult for me. Not only can I not perform my**

duty, but I easily forget things and get things wrong. Sometimes I get confused and I cause problems for the church and for my brothers and sisters. I want to attain salvation and pursue the truth but it's very hard. What can I do?' When they think of these things, they begin to fret, thinking, 'How come I only started believing in God at this age? How come I'm not like those who are in their 20s and 30s, or even those in their 40s and 50s? How come I only came across God's work now when I'm so old? It's not that my fate is bad; at least now I've encountered God's work. My fate is good, and God has been kind to me! There's just one thing that I'm not happy about, and that is that I'm too old. My memory isn't very good, and my health isn't that great, but I have a strong heart. It's just that my body doesn't obey me, and I get sleepy after listening for a while at gatherings. Sometimes I close my eyes to pray and fall asleep, and my mind wanders when I read God's words. After reading for a bit, I get sleepy and doze off, and the words don't sink in. What can I do? With such practical difficulties, am I still able to pursue and understand the truth? If not, and if I'm not able to practice in line with the truth principles, then won't all my faith be in vain? Won't I fail to attain salvation? What can I do? I'm so worried! At this age, nothing is important anymore. Now that I believe in God, I have no more worries or anything to feel anxious about, and my children are grown and they don't need me to look after or raise them anymore, my greatest wish in life is to pursue the truth, perform the duty of a created being, and ultimately attain salvation in the years I have left. However, looking now at my actual situation, dim-sighted from age and confused in mind, in poor health, not able to perform my duty well, and sometimes creating problems when I try to do as much as I can do, it seems as though attaining salvation isn't going to be easy

for me.' They think these things over and over and grow anxious, and then think, 'It seems as though good things only ever happen to young people and not to old people. It looks as though no matter how good things are, I won't be able to enjoy them anymore.' The more they think about these things, the more they fret and the more anxious they get. They not only worry about themselves, but they also feel hurt. If they cry, they feel it's not really worth crying over, and if they don't cry, that pain, that hurt, is always with them. So, what should they do? In particular, there are some elderly people who want to spend all their time expending themselves for God and performing their duty, but they're physically unwell. Some have high blood pressure, some have high blood sugar, some have gastrointestinal problems, and their physical strength cannot keep up with the demands of their duty, and so they fret. They see young people able to eat and drink, to run and jump, and they feel envious. The more they see young people do such things, the more distressed they feel, thinking, 'I want to do my duty well and pursue and understand the truth, and I want to practice the truth, too, so why is it so hard? I'm so old and useless! Does God not want old people? Are old people really useless? Can we not attain salvation?' They're sad and unable to feel happy no matter how they think about it. They don't want to miss such a wonderful time and such a great opportunity, yet they're unable to expend themselves and perform their duty with all their heart and soul like young people do. These elderly people fall into deep distress, anxiety, and worry because of their age. Every time they encounter some difficulty, setback, hardship, or obstacle, they blame their age, and even hate themselves and have no liking for themselves. But in any case, it is to no avail, there is no solution, and they have no way forward. Could it be that

they really have no way forward? Is there any solution? (Elderly people should also perform their duties as much as they're able.) It's acceptable for elderly people to perform their duties as much as they're able, right? Can elderly people not pursue the truth anymore because of their age? Are they not capable of understanding the truth? (Yes, they are.) Can elderly people understand the truth? They can understand some, and not even young people can understand it all, either. Elderly people always have a misconception, believing that they're confused, that their memory is bad, and so they can't understand the truth. Are they right? (No.) Although young people have much more energy than elderly people, and are physically stronger, actually their capacity to understand, comprehend, and know is just the same as that of elderly people. Weren't elderly people once young as well? They weren't born old, and young people will all grow old one day, too. Elderly people mustn't always be thinking that because they're old, physically weak, unwell, and with bad memories, they're different from young people. In fact, there is no difference. What do I mean when I say there is no difference? Whether someone is old or young, their corrupt dispositions are the same, their attitudes and views on all manner of things are the same, and their perspectives and standpoints on all manner of things are the same. So, elderly people mustn't think that because they're old, with fewer extravagant desires than young people, and able to be stable, they have no wild ambitions or desires, and that they have fewer corrupt dispositions—this is a misconception. Young people can jockey for position, so can't elderly people jockey for position? Young people can do things against the principles and act arbitrarily, so can't elderly people do the same? (Yes, they can.) Young people can be arrogant, so can't elderly people also be arrogant?

However, when elderly people are arrogant, due to their advanced age they aren't so aggressive, and it's not such a high-minded arrogance. Young people show more obvious manifestations of arrogance due to their flexible limbs and minds, while older people show less obvious manifestations of arrogance due to their rigid limbs and inflexible minds. However, their essence of arrogance and their corrupt dispositions are the same. No matter how long an elderly person has believed in God, or how many years they have performed their duty, if they are not in pursuit of the truth, then their corrupt dispositions will remain" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)).

God gave voice to every elderly person's inner thoughts. The elderly also want to expend themselves for God all the time, but their bodies can't take it. They don't have the energy or the memory to learn like young people do, so they can only do the duties they are capable of, but they worry that they do too little and God will not remember. And because they are of advanced age, have poor vision and are thus unable to comprehend much truth, they get dejected, anxious and worried about their future and destination. I was in just the kind of state that God exposed. I saw that most of the people that God's house cultivates are young, of good caliber, energetic and quick to learn, while I was much older, and despite having the drive to do my duty well, my energy and memory were no match for the youngsters. After doing their duties all day, the youngsters were still full of energy, and could review the problems and deviations in their work as well as their path of practice, whereas I had to go to bed early. Sometimes when my body couldn't handle the workload, I had to ask others to water newcomers in my stead. When supervisors fellowshipped on useful principles and methods, the younger ones would get it right away and apply everything to their duties, whereas it took me much longer to gain any comprehension.

Compared with the younger brothers and sisters, doing duties was much more of a strain for me. I was pretty unhappy with the situation, and blamed myself for being old and unable to do much in my duty. Even if I pursued the truth, I didn't comprehend much and God must have been displeased. I lived in misunderstanding of God, and couldn't help but worry about my future destination. At that moment, I realized that the elderly and the young might have varying amounts of energy and memory, but they are just the same when it comes to their corrupt dispositions. Young and old people alike are arrogant. Young and old people alike are selfish. When we encounter a situation orchestrated by God that we don't like, we all reveal our rebellious dispositions. We are unable to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. We always look after ourselves first in matters that pertain to our own interests, and reveal our selfish, despicable, corrupt dispositions. The elderly and youngsters alike have all been deeply corrupted by Satan. We all need to reflect on ourselves often, accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words, and seek the truth to resolve our corruption. I thought that my age and the amount of work I did in my duty were the criteria God used to decide if I should be commended. I thought that God just didn't like the old and I had a slim chance of being saved. My views and notions were so distorted! I knew that I must submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, do my best to fulfill my duty, and focus on reflecting on and knowing myself and pursuing dispositional transformation in my duty, as this is what accords with God's intention. After realizing this, I gained a sense of lucidity.

One morning during devotionals, I came across a passage of God's words that had a deep impact on me, and helped me comprehend more of God's intention. Almighty God says: **"In God's house and when it comes to the truth, are elderly people a special group? No, they're not. Age is**

irrelevant when it comes to the truth, as it is when it comes to your corrupt dispositions, the depth of your corruption, whether you are qualified to pursue the truth, whether you can attain salvation, or what the probability is of you being saved. Isn't that so? (It is.) We've fellowshiped on the truth for so many years now, but we've never fellowshiped on different kinds of truths according to people's different ages. The truth has never been fellowshiped on nor corrupt dispositions revealed exclusively for either young people or elderly people, nor has it been said that, because of their old age, rigid thinking, and inability to accept new things, their corrupt dispositions naturally decrease and change—these things have never been said. No single truth has ever been fellowshiped on specifically according to people's age and excluding elderly people. Elderly people are not a special group in the church, in God's house, or before God, but are rather the same as any other age group. There is nothing special about them, it's just that they have lived a little longer than others, that they arrived in this world a few years earlier than others, that their hair is a little greyer than others, and that their bodies have gotten old a little earlier than others; besides these things, there is no difference" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). Through God's words I learned that in God's house, the elderly are not a group to be singled out. They're just a bit older, with a bit more wear and tear. Perhaps they don't have the energy and vigor of young people, and they might suffer from certain diseases, but before the truth, there are no distinctions in age. As God expresses His words and does His work of judgment in the last days, He does not distinguish between the young and the old. Be it the elderly or the young, they've all been deeply corrupted by Satan, and all require God's salvation. Whether or not someone can be saved is not dictated by their age,

or what duty they do; the key is whether or not they walk the path of pursuing the truth. This is decided by God's righteous disposition. In the world of nonbelievers, elderly workers are often held in disfavor. People find them slow on the uptake, weak and unlikely to be able to create value, so most bosses like young workers and disfavor the old. I had delimited God according to the notions of nonbelievers, thinking that because young sisters and brothers could do many duties and contribute so much, they had the most chance of being saved, while elderly people did insignificant duties and accomplished little, so they were not held in God's favor, and they had little chance of being saved by God. I hadn't understood God's righteous disposition and judged Him based on my own notions and imaginings. This was blasphemous to God! I also came to understand that God's house is ruled by the truth, that God evaluates every person's actions based upon the truth. It's like how I knew this sister, she was young and smart, and she served as a leader, but she violated work arrangements and disrupted and disturbed the church's work, and she also retaliated against and suppressed those that gave her suggestions. She was ultimately deemed an evil person and expelled from the church. But then I knew this other much older sister, who wasn't educated and had average caliber, but she kept at her duty consistently—she had true faith in God and was loyal in her duty. These elderly brothers and sisters might not be as robust or have the best memory, but they do their best in their duties, and focus on reflecting and knowing themselves and pursue dispositional transformation in their duties. They may also be commended by God and have a chance to be saved. I also realized that aging is a natural and immutable process that is preordained by God, and so I should submit to it and just do what duties I could given my current age. Actually, as long as I had the right attitude, and focused on seeking the truth in my new duty, couldn't I also gain God's

enlightenment and guidance? Couldn't I also come to know my corruption and deficiencies? Couldn't I still pursue the truth? God hadn't deprived me of my right to do my duty and attain salvation, much less was He treating me differently due to my age. But I was unthankful toward God and even mistakenly thought He disliked the old, defying His arrangements and orchestrations. I was completely unreasonable! When I realized all this, I felt quite remorseful. I couldn't keep rebelling against and misunderstanding God, I had to put aside my anxieties and worries, and cooperate well in my new duty so as not to delay the church's work.

After that, I began to wonder why it was that despite knowing man's duty had nothing to do with blessings or misfortune, I still couldn't help but become worried about my destination after being assigned to a duty I was unsatisfied with. What was the source of my problem? During a gathering, my brothers and sisters read two passages of God's words for me and I identified the source of my problem through His words. Almighty God says: **"All corrupt humans live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sake; when they forsake things and expend themselves for God, it is in order to be blessed, and when they are loyal to Him, it is still in order to be rewarded. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of being blessed, rewarded, and entering the kingdom of heaven. In society, people work for their own benefit, and in the house of God, they do a duty in order to be blessed. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can endure much suffering. There is no better evidence of man's satanic nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"Before deciding to do their duty, deep in their hearts, antichrists are brimming with expectations toward their prospects, gaining blessings, a good**

destination, and even a crown, and they have the utmost confidence in attaining these things. They come to the house of God to do their duty with such intentions and aspirations. So, does their performance of duty contain the sincerity, genuine faith and loyalty that God requires? At this point, one cannot yet see their genuine loyalty, faith, or sincerity, because everyone harbors an entirely transactional mindset before they do their duty; everyone makes the decision to do their duty driven by interests, and also based on the precondition of their overflowing ambitions and desires. What is the antichrists' intention in doing their duty? It's to make a deal, to make an exchange. It could be said that these are the conditions they set for doing duty: 'If I do my duty, then I must obtain blessings and have a good destination. I must obtain all the blessings and benefits that god has said are prepared for humankind. If I can't obtain them, then I won't do this duty.' They come to the house of God to do their duty with such intentions, ambitions, and desires. It seems like they do have some sincerity, and of course for those who are new believers and are just starting to do their duty, it can also be called enthusiasm. But there is no genuine faith or loyalty in this; there's only that degree of enthusiasm. It can't be called sincerity. Judging from this attitude antichrists have toward doing their duty, it is wholly transactional and filled with their desires for benefits like gaining blessings, entering the kingdom of heaven, obtaining a crown, and receiving rewards" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). Through the revelation of God's words, I saw that I was no different than an antichrist, and only believed and did my duty to gain blessings and enter God's kingdom. Before putting faith in God, I just lived by satanic poisons like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Never lift a finger without a reward." I thought it was right

and proper to consider my own interests. As long as something was beneficial to me, I would do it regardless of how much I suffered or what price I had to pay. After accepting God's work in the last days, I heard I could gain eternal life and enter God's kingdom if I expended myself for God and did my duty. Seeing that this great blessing could not be bought with money or valuables, I forsook my family, quit my job and began following God and doing my duty. When God's house assigned me to watering duty, I thought to myself, "In watering duty I can read a lot of God's words, and there are lots of chances to fellowship the truth, all of which will give me a good chance of gaining truth and attaining salvation." So I was motivated to do my duty well, hoping that I would attain salvation and enter God's kingdom. I had the same attitude toward my duty as an antichrist. I just did it to gain blessings and was bartering with God. God must have been disgusted! I was highly motivated in my duty, but I was in poor health and wasn't getting any younger. I just didn't have the energy, strength or memory the youngsters possessed, and even needed help from others to do my duty. I would just slow down the work if I continued with the watering duty, and would influence the watering results. If I had any self-awareness and reason. I would have let go of my desire for blessings and made way for younger brothers and sisters. This would be advantageous for the church's work. But all I thought about was how to attain blessings. I was using the duty God gave me to satisfy my desire for blessings. When I didn't see any hope of attaining blessings from my new duty, I failed to submit, misunderstood God and even blamed Him. How could I be considered someone that truly submits to and has faith in God? I had been deeply poisoned by this satanic poison of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Whatever situation I encountered, I would first consider whether I could gain profit or blessings from it, putting my

own interests before the truth. I didn't consider the church's work at all, thinking only of my own interests. The fact that I had been chosen by God, enjoyed so much of the watering and supply of His words in my years as a believer, had comprehended some truth, and was able to do my duty as a created being, this was all God's enormous grace. Yet I didn't give thanks to God or think of how to repay His love. If something didn't go quite my way, I would misunderstand and blame God. I was being completely unreasonable! Thanks to God for exposing me in time, otherwise, if I maintained this transactional attitude toward my duty, not only would I not gain truth and attain salvation, God would despise me and eliminate me. Realizing all this, I felt remorseful and reproached myself, so I prayed to God, saying, "O God! I have followed You for many years, but haven't submitted to You in the slightest and have misunderstood Your intention. I took the duty I ought to do as a created being for a bartering chip I could exchange for blessings. How You must have despised this! O God! I am ready to repent to You, please guide me to live according to Your words."

During devotionals, I came across a passage of God's words that gave me a path of practice. Almighty God says: **"While they're living, elderly people should strive even more to pursue the truth, pursue life entry, and work harmoniously together with brothers and sisters to perform their duty; only in this way can their stature grow. Elderly people must absolutely not presume themselves to be senior to others and flaunt their old age. Young people can reveal all kinds of corrupt disposition, and so can you; young people can do all manner of foolish things, and so can you; young people harbor notions, and so do elderly people; young people can be rebellious, and so can elderly people; young people can reveal an antichrist disposition, and so can elderly people; young people have wild ambitions and desires, and so do elderly people,**

without the slightest difference; young people can cause disruptions and disturbances and get cleared out of the church, and so can elderly people. Therefore, besides being able to perform their duty well to the best of their abilities, there are many things they can do. Unless you're stupid, demented, and cannot understand the truth, and unless you're unable to take care of yourself, there are many things you should do. Just like young people, you can pursue the truth, you can seek the truth, and you should often come before God to pray, seek the truth principles, strive to view people and things and comport yourself and act wholly according to God's words, with the truth as your criterion. This is the path you should follow, and you should not feel distressed, anxious, or worried because you're old, because you have many ailments, or because your body is aging. Feeling distress, anxiety, and worry is not the right thing to do—they are irrational manifestations"

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). Through God's words I learned that no matter what duty the church assigns me to, it is God's intention that I seek the truth through my duty, use the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition, practice dealing with affairs in my duty according to principle, and ultimately set foot on the path to salvation. Now, apart from doing all that I can in my duty, I reflect on any manifestations of corruption whenever I can, and write experiential testimony articles. When I meet with brothers and sisters, we discuss what notions the newcomers have and I fellowship on as much as I understand. I feel very peaceful and at ease practicing in this way.

My biggest takeaway from this experience is that God treats everyone fairly. God evaluates all things using the truth, He does not care how old you are or what duty you do. He just cares if you walk the path of pursuing the truth. As long as you seek the truth and walk the right path, you have a

chance of attaining salvation. God does not disfavor the elderly in the least. Whenever I think back at how I misunderstood God, I feel that I owe so much to Him and tears come to my eyes. At this age, I still have the chance to welcome the Creator, and have been lucky enough to hear God's voice, receive the judgment and chastisement of His words, and expend myself for Him in my duties. What a great blessing this is! No matter whether or not I attain blessings or what my outcome will be, I will pursue the truth diligently and do all I'm capable of in my duty to repay God's love.

92. The Story Behind a Family's Persecution

By Mu Han, China

I once had a happy family, and my husband was very kind to me. My only regret was that I didn't have children for many years after marriage. I saw many renowned doctors and spent a lot of money, but it was all in vain. Because of this, I spent most of my time in a state of pain and despair. One day in 2015, a sister came to my house to gather with my mother-in-law. She shared Almighty God's gospel of the last days with me and read many of Almighty God's words to me. From God's words, I understood that man was created by God, that people's destinies are in God's hands, that everything a person has is given by God, and that when to have children is also predestined by God. Gradually, I managed to extricate myself from my pain, I no longer felt sad about not having children, and my mood was much brighter than before. Later, I had a child. At that time, although my husband did not believe in God, he supported our faith. Our family was happy and harmonious, and our neighbors were very envious.

But the good times didn't last long. In 2017, my husband's parents saw the CCP's slander and defamation against The Church of Almighty God on TV, and saw that the CCP was suppressing and arresting those who believed in Almighty God. They were afraid of being arrested and no longer dared to host brothers and sisters. Then they tried to persuade me to stop believing as well. One day, my father-in-law said in a serious tone, "I saw on TV that the CCP is arresting people who believe in Almighty God everywhere. Many people have been arrested, and I heard that once they are arrested, they are tortured, and that the whole family, from the adults to the children, all suffer, and that in the future, the children of these people won't be able to go to college, join the army, or become civil servants. For the sake of this

family, don't let your brothers and sisters come to our house for gatherings anymore. You should stop believing too!" My mother-in-law echoed him, saying, "There's a sister who is wanted by the CCP and on the run, and even now, she still can't go home. Her son signed up to join the army, but because his mother believes in Almighty God, he failed the political review and wasn't accepted. The CCP is cracking down so hard right now. You should stop believing!" After hearing their words, I thought, "People are created by God, and it is right for us to worship God. If we stop believing in God out of fear of persecution, isn't that betraying God?" So I said, "We believe in God by gathering to read God's words and by walking the right path in life. We don't do anything illegal. The CCP arrests and persecutes the believers because it is an atheistic party that resists God. We just need to be more careful in the future." My mother-in-law said, "Believing in God is a good thing, but it's useless trying to fight the CCP. The CCP doesn't allow people to believe, and if you insist on believing and are arrested one day, this family will be ruined!" I saw that I couldn't reason with them, so I didn't say anything more. Later, my husband also came to be misled by the CCP's rumors, and he feared that my faith would get me arrested and implicate the family, so he often prevented me from attending gatherings and doing my duty. My mother-in-law's attitude toward me also changed drastically. She not only stopped helping me with my child but also surveilled me. Whenever I went out to a gathering, she would tell my husband, and my husband would often get angry with me, threatening that if I continued to go to gatherings, he would seek out the brothers and sisters to get even. My whole family stopped me from believing in God, and no one helped me with the child. I couldn't go out to gatherings or do my duty, and I felt really weak and tormented. I often cried in sadness, not knowing when these days would end. Sometimes I even thought, "If I listen to them

and stop going to gatherings, won't the arguments stop? Can our family return to the happy life we had before?" But I knew it was wrong to think this way. I couldn't betray God to please them. I would be truly lacking in conscience if I did that.

Later I read a passage of God's words and my state changed somewhat. God says: **"Today, most people do not have that knowledge. They believe that suffering is without value, they are renounced by the world, their home life is troubled, they are not beloved of God, and their prospects are bleak. The suffering of some people reaches an extreme, and their thoughts turn to death. This is not true love for God; such people are cowards, they have no perseverance, they are weak and powerless! God is eager for man to love Him, but the more man loves Him, the greater man's suffering, and the more man loves Him, the greater man's trials. If you love Him, then every kind of suffering will befall you—and if you do not, then perhaps everything will go smoothly for you and all will be peaceful around you. When you love God, you will feel that much around you is insurmountable, and because your stature is too small you will be refined; moreover, you will be incapable of satisfying God, and you will always feel that God's intentions are too lofty, that they are beyond the reach of man. Because of all this you will be refined—because there is much weakness within you, and much that is incapable of satisfying the intentions of God, you will be refined internally. Yet you must clearly see that purification is only achieved through refinement. Thus, during these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). Reading God's words moved me deeply. My family believed the CCP's rumors and persecuted and obstructed me from believing in God, making me want to compromise. I was so weak and lacking in stature. The Communist Party resists God, and believing in and following God and walking the right path of life in the country where it rules is bound to be littered with obstacles. My family's persecution was also a test for me, to see whether I would stand on the side of God or Satan. Thinking of this, I resolved that no matter how my family persecuted me, I would never compromise, and no matter how much I suffered, I would follow God to the end. Later, I moved to another house with my child, and I was no longer under my in-laws' surveillance. My husband was out of the house during the day as he was at work, and I could attend gatherings and do my duty again. I was really happy.

Later, Sister Chen Ping came to gather with me, but my husband found out, and he drove her away, and then he angrily said to me, "Those people aren't allowed to come to our house for gatherings anymore. If the police were to find out, our whole family would suffer. If I find them here again, I'll call the police!" I was furious and argued back at him, but no matter what I said, my husband wouldn't let me believe in God anymore. I thought about how Sister Chen Ping couldn't come to gather with me anymore, and with my child being so young, I couldn't take him to gatherings and do my duty. I felt a weakness inside me, and I felt that the path of faith was too difficult, and that maybe I should stop doing my duty for a while and wait until my child grows up to start again. Later, I read God's words and gained some discernment of my state. God says: **"When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to mislead the person**

and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to obstruct God, using various wicked ploys to tempt, disturb and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God. Is this not Satan's sinister motive? You often say that Satan is so wicked, so bad, but have you seen it? You can see how bad mankind is; you have not seen how bad the real Satan is. Yet in the matter of Job, you have clearly observed just how wicked Satan is. This matter has made Satan's hideous countenance and its essence very clear. In warring with God, and trailing along behind Him, Satan's objective is to demolish all the work God wants to do, to occupy and control those whom God wants to gain, to completely extinguish those whom God wants to gain. If they are not extinguished, then they come to Satan's possession, to be used by it—this is its objective” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). From God's words, I saw clearly the evil and vileness of Satan. God works to save people, but Satan tries its best to block people from following God. It makes up all kinds of rumors to smear The Church of Almighty God, and it treats believers as arch-criminals of the state, arresting and persecuting them, even implicating the families of Christians, intimidating our nonbelieving relatives and using them to disturb and obstruct us in our faith. The vile purpose of the great red dragon doing all this is to make us all betray God and go to hell along with it. My family was afraid of being arrested by the CCP and didn't dare believe in God, and they banded together to obstruct my belief. When I faced persecution, I felt weak, and wanted to abandon my duty to protect our happy little family.

This would have meant falling into Satan's trap! Understanding this, I resolved that no matter how difficult the road ahead was, I would not compromise, and that I had to rely on God to stand firm in my testimony. Later, I took my child out to gatherings in secret. Amazingly, he fell asleep as soon as we got to the sister's house, and woke up only after our gatherings had ended, meaning I could attend the gatherings with peace of mind. Later, I was elected as a church leader, and the church work was very busy, so I sent my son to kindergarten and continued to do my duty.

In 2018, the CCP launched another special operation targeting The Church of Almighty God, and all the streets were plastered with banners reading "Severe Crackdown Against The Church of Almighty God" and "Troops Won't Be Withdrawn Until the Purge Is Complete." Loudspeakers in residential areas blared announcements on loop from morning to night, aiming to rile up the public and get them to report on those who believed in Almighty God, with a reward of 2,000 yuan for each arrest. During that time, many brothers and sisters were arrested, with dark clouds and panic hanging over the city. My husband was scared of me getting arrested and started to persecute me even more severely. One day, as I was about to leave, my husband said, "Don't think I don't know you're going out to gatherings in secret. I see how busy you are, you must be a leader by now! The police specifically arrest people who believe in Almighty God. Look, there are surveillance cameras and monitoring devices all over the streets, and the police could catch you at any moment. You're not allowed to believe anymore, or you'll drag us down with you! You must write a guarantee for me right now, pledging that you won't believe in Almighty God anymore. If you don't write it, I'll throw you out of this house and you'll never see our child again!" I was shocked to hear him say this. Only the CCP devils would make a person write a guarantee not to believe in

God. Isn't he a devil! I said firmly, "Almighty God is the Savior who has come to save humanity, I will never betray God, let alone write a guarantee!" This made my husband fly into a rage, and he grabbed me by the neck with his left hand and gave me two hard slaps with his right hand. My face immediately burned with pain, and tears flowed down my face uncontrollably. In all these years together, my husband had never hit me, but on that day, he slapped me because he believed the CCP's rumors. I felt so wounded and weak. I prayed to God through my tears, asking Him to give me faith and strength. Seeing it was time to go to a gathering, I made an excuse to leave. But my husband stopped me, saying, "The only thing I'll be doing today is following you. If you dare go to a gathering, I'll call the police and have you all arrested!"

But after that, I still found a way to attend the gathering. My husband saw that I wasn't listening to him, so he said awful things about me in front of my parents and relatives, trying to get my family to urge me not to believe. My mother said, "I know what she's like. Since she came to your house, she hasn't argued with you, and she's done everything she should. She just believes in God. What's wrong with that?" My brother also tried to persuade him. Seeing that my family wouldn't side with him, my husband flew into a rage. He found my MP5 player that I read God's words with and smashed it. He also tore up the Bible, and then he smashed the glass bathroom door, much of our kitchenware, and a number of other things. My in-laws rushed to my house when they found out, angrily criticizing me, saying, "The Communist Party doesn't allow people to believe in God, so can't you just stop believing? If you still insist on believing in God and get caught, it will bring disaster upon our family. Your husband won't be contracted for any building constructions anymore, our property will be confiscated, and then the whole family won't have any means of living.

This all ends today! Get rid of the books and stop believing!” My mother-in-law also had my father-in-law go to Chen Ping’s house to get even with her. I thought about how Chen Ping was responsible for church work, and that if something happened to her, the whole church would be impacted, and I angrily said, “Believing in God is my own choice. Don’t go around bothering others. From now on, she won’t come here, and I won’t go to her.” Hearing me say this, they thought I had compromised and left. But later on, my husband still went to Chen Ping’s house to bother her, leaving her with no choice but to leave her home to do her duty. Thinking about how Chen Ping couldn’t go back home because of me, I felt really guilty and uncomfortable, and I also thought about how because of my family’s persecution, I couldn’t contact brothers and sisters. I spent my days in a state of deep repression. I had to be careful when I read God’s words, afraid of being discovered by my husband, and when I looked at our large room, I felt like a bird trapped in a cage. Although life was comfortable, I didn’t feel any happiness. How I wished I could believe in God and read His words freely!

Not long after, my husband said, “A friend from the police station said the government is launching a special operation against you believers in Almighty God, and that once they catch you, no amount of money can bail you out. Not only will you suffer inside, but our entire family will be dragged down with you. The government wants to ban all religious beliefs. Even the Three-Self Church is going to be torn down. Do you think you can live a good life if you don’t listen to the CCP? Believing in God in China is a death wish! I don’t want to live in constant fear and anxiety because of your faith. You have two choices: One, give up your faith and stay home to take care of our son. If you do this, you will be in charge of this family, and I’ll listen to you in everything. Two, keep your faith, but leave our son

behind, and leave this house with nothing.” It was clear to me that our marriage was over. I felt very sad, and thinking of my child having to part from his mother at such a young age, made me feel particularly weak and weep silent tears. Facing the impending breakup of my family, the past flashed through my mind like scenes from a movie. Could I really give up the family I had worked so hard to build over all these years? In particular, when I thought about being separated from my child and not being able to watch him grow up, leaving seemed ten thousand times harder. My heart ached like it was being cut by a knife, and my head was in a daze. In my painful struggle, a thought popped into my head, “If I stop believing in God, my husband won’t divorce me, I can spend my days beside my child, and the whole family can return to the way it was, living in happy familial bliss.” When I thought like this, I realized this was a betrayal of God. I thought of how I spent my days living in darkness and emptiness when I didn’t believe in God, and how it was God who saved me from this sea of suffering, supplying me with the truth and giving me the opportunity to be saved. If I chose to betray God for the sake of my family, I would be unworthy of God’s salvation! So I prayed to God in my heart, “God, I don’t want to betray You, I want to believe in You, do my duty, and repay Your love, but I can’t bear to leave my child. I am so weak. Please give me faith and strength.” After praying, I recalled a hymn of God’s words entitled **“You Should Forsake All for the Truth”**:

1 You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose a lifetime of dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment.

2 You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment

Under the enlightenment and guidance of God's words, I understood that I could not betray God to preserve my family. I thought about how God, to save people from Satan's power, endures immense humiliation by becoming flesh to speak and work among people, suffering all kinds of hardships. God has paid all His painstaking price. If I were to betray God for the sake of my family's happiness, in what way would I have any conscience or human dignity? My pursuit of the truth and God's salvation in my belief in God is the right path in life, and all the suffering endured to obtain the truth is worth it. No matter the physical pleasure or comfort of life, it is all empty, and only by obtaining the truth can one be saved and live on. I shouldn't throw away the truth and betray God for the sake of my child and family. I had to be strong, pursue the truth, repay God's love, and live out a meaningful life. At that moment, everything became clear to me. No matter how my husband pressured me, I would never do anything to betray God. My husband was pressuring me into a divorce, fearing that if I were arrested, I would drag him down with me. He was acting to protect his own interests. I saw that only God truly loves people. Where is the love between people? The relationships between people are only driven by personal interests, and once there are no interests to be gained, people turn

hostile. My husband clearly knew that believing in God was the right path but still sided with the CCP to pressure me. His essence was in resistance to God, and by following the CCP, he was following the path to perdition and destruction. Meanwhile, by believing in God and pursuing the truth, I was following the path of salvation. Our paths were fundamentally different. Living together only meant continuing to be pressured by him, and being left with no way to freely believe in God or pursue the truth. So, I calmly said, "Since you propose divorce, I agree." My husband sneered and said, "Once we're divorced, you're never seeing our child again, and if I find out you've come for him, I'll call the police and have you all arrested!" My mother-in-law then came over to try to persuade me, saying, "If you just stop believing in God, you can take your child wherever you want, and live a good life! Besides, he's so young; how can you bear to leave?" Hearing my mother-in-law's words, my heart felt like it was being stabbed by a knife. I thought, "Since he was born, he's never been apart from me. Who will take care of him in the future? Will he suffer? Will others bully him? What if he gets sick and there's no one there to care for him?" The more I thought about it, the more it hurt. I then recalled God's words: **"I will always comfort all those who perceive My intentions, and I will not allow them to suffer or come to harm. The crucial thing now is to be able to take action in accordance with My intentions. Those who do this will certainly receive My blessings and come under My protection. Who can truly and completely expend themselves for Me and offer up their all for My sake? You are all half-hearted; your thoughts go around and around, thinking of home, of the outside world, of food and clothing. Despite the fact that you are here before Me, doing things for Me, deep down you are still thinking of your wife, children, and parents at home. Are all these things your property? Why do you not entrust**

them into My hands? Do you not have sufficient faith in Me? Or is it that you are afraid I will make inappropriate arrangements for you? Why do you always worry about the family of your flesh and pine for your loved ones? Do I have a certain place in your heart?" (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 59).

"Besides birth and childrearing, the parents' responsibility in their children's lives is simply to provide them with a formal environment to grow up in, for nothing except the predestination of the Creator has a bearing on a person's fate. No one can control what kind of future a person will have; it is predetermined long in advance, and not even one's parents can change one's fate. As far as fate is concerned, everyone is independent, and everyone has their own fate. So, no one's parents can stave off one's fate in life or exert the slightest influence on the role one plays in life. It could be said that the family into which one is destined to be born and the environment in which one grows up are nothing more than the preconditions for fulfilling one's mission in life. They do not in any way determine a person's fate in life or the kind of destiny within which a person fulfills their mission" (The Word, Vol. 2. On

Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). God's words gave me faith and strength.

I thought about how I was infertile for many years due to illness, with even renowned doctors being helpless, and that when I was living in darkness and pain, it was God's words that brought me light, allowed me to understand God's sovereignty and predestination, and helped free me from pain. Later, I miraculously had a child. My family and child are gifts from God. I always thought I could take good care of my child, and never entrusted him into God's hands. God's words made me understand that it is actually God who watches over, preserves, and provides for each person. My child's fate is in God's hands, and He will arrange everything for him.

His destiny and whether he suffers are all determined by God. It is not as if I can take good care of him just because I'm home, nor can I guarantee his health and safety just by being with him every day. I should entrust everything to do with my child to God and focus on doing my duty. Thinking this way, I let go of some of my worries about my child, and my heart was no longer in such pain. My mother-in-law was still complaining about me, but I didn't want to argue with her, thinking to myself, "Clearly, it is your son who wants a divorce to protect himself, and yet you say that I am abandoning my family and child because of my faith in God. Don't you see you're turning the truth on its head?"

I also thought of a brother in our area who had been hunted by the CCP because of his faith. He had risked his life to return home in secret to care for his elderly paralyzed father, only to be captured and beaten to death by the CCP. In what way were the believers abandoning their families? Wasn't it the CCP's cruel persecution of Christians that led to such outcomes? I recalled a passage of God's words: **"For thousands of years this has been the land of filth. It is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations, being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. Who can see the world beyond the skies? The devil tightly trusses all of man's body, it veils both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has rampaged for several thousand years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons; this pack of watchdogs, meanwhile, stare with glaring eyes, deeply fearful that God will catch them unawares and wipe them all out, leaving them without a place of peace and happiness.**

How could the people of a ghost town such as this ever have seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God's eager intentions? Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!" (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). Contemplating God's words, I saw that the CCP is indeed an evil demon resisting God and harming people. It pretends to support religious freedoms, but secretly, it madly resists God and captures and persecutes His chosen people. The CCP should truly be cursed and damned! God is incarnated to express the truth on earth, purify and save people, but the CCP madly creates disturbances and disruptions. In order to capture and persecute God's chosen people and eradicate His work, over the years, not only has the CCP carried out various special operations to suppress The Church of Almighty God, but it also uses cellphone tracking and installs electronic surveillance in the streets to monitor and capture brothers and sisters, forcing many brothers and sisters into

becoming homeless and separating from their families, with many brothers and sisters having been captured, tortured in prison, and even beaten to death. The CCP also deprives the families of Christians of their rights to work and go to school, instigating and stirring up family conflict, and causing countless families to break apart. The CCP is truly despicable and evil! My once-happy family, had been shattered and divided because of the CCP's rumors and suppression. The CCP is a demon group resisting God, harming and devouring people! By undergoing these persecutions, I also saw that God's wisdom is exercised based on Satan's schemes. Despite the CCP's crazy persecution, it has not shaken the determination of God's chosen people to follow Him. Instead, more and more people have accepted God's salvation of the last days, and God's gospel of the last days has spread to many countries overseas. That which comes from God is sure to prosper! I thought of how many people are still blinded by the CCP's rumors, living under Satan's power, not knowing of God's salvation of the last days. I have the responsibility and obligation to share God's gospel of the last days with those who yearn for God's appearance. I made a resolution before God that I would follow Him to the end and spread the gospel to repay His love. Later, I went through the divorce process with my husband.

Looking back on my experiences now, although I lost my family and my life is not as comfortable as before, and I cannot spend my days and nights with my child, I have come to understand some truths and gained discernment. Today, being able to come before God and do my duty as a created being, and to spread and bear witness to God's salvation of the last days, is truly valuable and meaningful! I will never regret my choice.

93. A Unique Experience in the Pandemic

By Mingxin, China

In early November of 2022, the pandemic situation where I was doing my duties was becoming more and more serious, and in the space of a few days, several surrounding areas became high-risk zones. Immediately following that, the whole county was sealed off and everyone was made to quarantine at home. Shortly after, the pandemic ripped through the community I was in, and over a hundred people were taken off into isolation one after another, with people still being taken away constantly. I couldn't believe how fast the disease was spreading, with so many people becoming infected in just a few short days. I couldn't help but worry, "Will my partnered sisters and I get infected too?" But then I thought, "We're different from nonbelievers. We believers are protected by God. Besides, we are responsible for video work, which is pretty important. Our work is also getting good results. If brothers and sisters in other places are having problems, then they will write to us to ask for our help. If we get infected and can't do our duties, won't that delay the work? The Bible says: 'A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you' (Psalm 91:7). If God does not permit it, even if the whole community gets infected, we will remain untouched." These thoughts gave me a feeling of calm and an ineffable sense of superiority. I'd sometimes see host sisters afraid of getting infected, and I'd feel as if they lacked faith. I'd think, "You're hosting us, God will protect you too."

The pandemic eventually spread beyond all control in our community. Every day I'd see workers disinfecting large outdoor spaces and the host sisters would often talk about how nonbelievers kept getting taken off into isolation. I was so glad to be a believer, and I felt like a baby in the hands of

God. With God's care and protection, there was no way the pandemic could touch us. But shortly after, something unexpected happened. On November 18, a sister I was cooperating with suddenly started running a fever and coughing after washing herself. Then the host sisters started to get feverish and suffer headaches, and I couldn't help but wonder, "Could they have gotten infected?" But I quickly dispelled these thoughts, believing they couldn't be true. But the next day, my whole body suddenly felt sore and weak, and another sister became feverish as well. We did a test, and both we and the sisters hosting us tested positive. At first, I simply couldn't dare believe this to be true and I didn't know how I could be infected. I kept thinking back on my recent behaviors in my duties, telling myself, "I didn't do anything that clearly resisted God, and our work has been going pretty well too. I shouldn't be getting punished, so why have I gotten infected? Could it be that God has seen me grow in stature, and is using this sickness to try me so that I can bear witness for Him? If that's the case, so long as I don't complain and keep at my duty, God won't let anything happen to me." Then, I kept reminding myself to keep at my duty as before and that with God's protection, my condition would soon turn around. But things didn't happen as I'd imagined, and my condition not only didn't improve, but kept getting worse and worse instead. My fever kept coming back and I felt really sore all over, particularly with my throat being sore and swollen. Whenever I tried eating or drinking, it felt like I was swallowing a knife, and when I tried to sleep at night, my nose became blocked and I could only breathe through my mouth, making my throat even more sore and dry. I started to complain in my heart, "Why isn't this illness getting better?" And there were two nights in particular when I was struck by chest tightness and had difficulty breathing. I thought of the images of those who had died because of respiratory failure caused by the disease and became even more

afraid. I kept worrying, “How can my condition keep getting worse? Am I going to die? Is God trying me or punishing me with this illness?” These thoughts made my heart feel really heavy. During those few days of sickness in particular, when it was raining and cold in the house, it was as if there was an air of death over me, and I felt a kind of unplaceable bitterness in me, as if I had been abandoned by God. My previous sense of superiority had evaporated by this point. I thought about how God had graced and blessed me before, and how the others had looked up to and envied me, but now I felt utterly insignificant, as if one day I might just silently fade away.... The more I thought about it, the more miserable I felt, like the path ahead of me had gone dark, and I didn’t have the energy to do anything. Coupled with the adverse reactions I was having to the sickness, I just wanted to lie down and rest. Though I knew that I had to stick to my duty, my whole body had been completely sapped of energy, and I thought, “Not only am I not getting better, I’m actually getting sicker and sicker. I can’t keep to my duty and I haven’t borne any testimony. Could this be the end for me?” In my pain, I prayed to God, “Oh God! I feel so weak right now and don’t understand Your intention. I don’t know how to get through this, please enlighten and guide me!”

After this, I read two passages of God’s words: **“When God arranges for someone to get an illness, whether major or minor, His purpose in doing so is not to make you appreciate the ins and outs of being sick, the harm the illness does to you, the hardships and difficulties the illness causes you, and all the myriad feelings the illness causes you to feel—His purpose is not for you to appreciate sickness through being sick. Rather, His purpose is for you to learn the lessons from sickness, to learn how to feel for God’s intentions, to know the corrupt dispositions you reveal and the wrong attitudes you adopt toward God**

when you're sick, and to learn how to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, so that you can achieve true submission to God and be able to stand firm in your testimony—this is absolutely key. God wishes to save you and cleanse you through sickness. What about you does He wish to cleanse? He wishes to cleanse all your extravagant desires and demands toward God, and even cleanse the various plans, judgments, and schemes you make at all costs to survive and live” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). **“Though you have undergone all kinds of suffering and experienced all manner of torment, that suffering is not at all like the trials of Job; it is, instead, the judgment and chastisement received by people because of their rebelliousness, because of their resistance, and because of My righteous disposition; it is righteous judgment, chastisement, and curse. Job, on the other hand, was a righteous man among the Israelites who received Jehovah's great love and tenderness. He had committed no evil acts, and he did not resist Jehovah; rather, he was faithfully devoted to Jehovah. Because of his righteousness, he was subjected to trials, and he underwent fiery trials because he was a faithful servant of Jehovah. The people of today are subjected to My judgment and curse because of their filthiness and unrighteousness. Though their suffering is nothing like what Job went through when he lost his livestock, his property, his servants, his children, and all of those dear to him, what they suffer is fiery refinement and burning. And what makes it more serious than what Job experienced is that such trials are not lessened or removed because people are weak; instead, they are long-lasting, and continue until people's final day of life. This is punishment, judgment, and curse; it is merciless burning, and even more, it is humankind's rightful 'inheritance.' It is what people deserve, and it is where My righteous**

disposition is expressed. This is a known fact” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Is Your Understanding of Blessings?). From God’s word, I understood that God allowing me to get infected wasn’t to make me live in sickness or consider my flesh, nor was it to reveal me or eliminate me, much less was it because I had stature as I thought, worthy of bearing witness to God like Job, but rather, it was because I had a corrupt disposition. God was using this sickness to reveal my corruption, to cleanse me, and to change me. If I could reflect on myself and seek the truth, then this would be a good chance to gain the truth, but I was always living in notions and imaginings, and determining that God wouldn’t let me get sick. I just wanted to live in God’s embrace like a baby and not experience life’s storms. After I got sick, I didn’t focus on reflecting on myself and learning a lesson, but instead, I had the absurd thought that I had stature, and that God was using this situation to make me bear witness for Him. I refrained from complaining and kept at my duty, thinking that by doing so, I could stand firm in my testimony and satisfy God, and then God would take away this sickness. As a result, when my condition kept worsening instead of improving, I complained and hoped that God would take away this sickness, even to the point of becoming guarded, misunderstanding, and thinking that God wanted to reveal me and eliminate me. In what way was I experiencing God’s work? I thought of the people of Nineveh. Their corruption, wickedness, and evil deeds incurred God’s wrath, so God sent Jonah to announce to them that they had 40 days to repent. The people of Nineveh all believed God, and king and commoner alike truly repented to God in sackcloth and ashes, and they eventually earned God’s mercy and forgiveness. My being infected contained God’s intention, and like the Ninevites, I had to repent to God.

At this time, I reflected on the states I had revealed while facing this illness. I recalled some of God's words: **"In God's family, among brothers and sisters, no matter how high your status or standing, or how important your duty, and no matter how great your talent and contributions, or how long you have believed in God, in the eyes of God you are a created being, an ordinary created being, and the noble titles and appellations you have bestowed on yourself do not exist. If you always regard them as crowns, or as capital that enables you to belong to a special group or be a special personage, then by doing this you resist and conflict with God's views, and are incompatible with God. What will be the consequences of this? Will it cause you to resist the duties that a created being should perform? In the eyes of God, you are but a created being, but do not regard yourself as one. Can you truly submit to God with such a mindset? You always think wishfully, 'God shouldn't treat me like this, He could never treat me like this.' Does this not create a conflict with God? When God acts at odds with your notions, your mentality, and your needs, what will you think in your heart? How will you deal with the environments God has arranged for you? Will you submit? (No.) You will not submit, and you will certainly resist, oppose, grumble, and complain, puzzling over it again and again in your heart, thinking 'But God used to protect me and treat me graciously. Why has He changed now? I can't live anymore!' So you start being petulant and acting up. If, at home, you behaved like this toward your parents, it would be excusable and they wouldn't do anything to you. But it's not acceptable in God's house. Because you are an adult and a believer, even other people won't stand for your nonsense—do you think God would tolerate such behavior? Will He condone you doing this to Him? No, He won't. Why won't He? God is**

not your parent, He is God, He is the Creator, and the Creator would never allow a created being to be petulant and unreasonable or to throw tantrums in front of Him. When God chastises and judges you, tests you, or takes away from you, when He places you in adversity, He wants to see a created being's attitude in how they treat the Creator, He wants to see what kind of path a created being chooses, and He will never allow you to be petulant and unreasonable, or to spout preposterous justifications. After understanding these things, shouldn't people think about how they should deal with everything that the Creator does? First of all, people should assume their proper places as created beings and acknowledge their identity as created beings. Can you acknowledge that you are a created being? If you can acknowledge it, then you should assume your proper place as a created being and submit to the Creator's arrangements, and even if you suffer a little, you do so without complaint. This is what it means to be someone with sense. If you do not think you are a created being, but reckon that you have titles and a halo over your head, and that you are a person of status, a great leader, conductor, editor, or director in God's family, and that you are someone who has made worthy contributions to the work of God's family—if that is what you think, then you are a most unreasonable and brazenly shameless person. Are you people with status, standing, and worth? (We are not.) Then what are you? (I am a created being.) That's right, you are just an ordinary created being. Among people, you can flaunt your qualifications, play the seniority card, brag about your contributions, or talk about your heroic exploits. But before God, these things do not exist, and you must never talk about them, or show them off, or assume the airs of an old hand. Things will go awry if you flaunt your qualifications. God will regard

you as utterly unreasonable and arrogant to the extreme. He will be repulsed and disgusted by you, and sideline you, and you will be in trouble then” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (11)). God’s words woke me from my slumber! I’d been viewing my important duty, the results of my work, and the approval of the leaders, workers, brothers, and sisters as capital, and I began to flaunt my qualifications and highlight my achievements, in the thought that I was different from nonbelievers and that God would surely protect me from the pandemic, and that even if I did get sick, it would be because I had stature and God was trying me to make me bear witness to Him, as if I were somehow separate from the rest of corrupt humanity. I saw just how arrogant I had become. In reading these words of God in particular: **“Things will go awry if you flaunt your qualifications. God will regard you as utterly unreasonable and arrogant to the extreme. He will be repulsed and disgusted by you, and sideline you, and you will be in trouble then,”** I realized the sheer loathing God has toward such people. Thinking back on the course of my illness, not only had I not submitted, but I also flaunted my qualifications before God and made unreasonable demands, truly repulsing and disgusting God. If I didn’t repent, I would be spurned and eliminated by God. Realizing this, I quickly prayed to God, “Oh God! If it weren’t for this illness, I wouldn’t have reflected on myself and I wouldn’t even have realized that I was resisting You. Oh God, please have mercy upon me, and enable me to submit and learn a lesson.”

Later on, I asked myself, “I used to think I was getting results in my work and gaining the approval of brothers and sisters, and that God should approve of me and protect me from the pandemic, but is this how God really sees it?” One day, I found an answer in God’s words. Almighty God says: **“You might imagine that, having been a follower for so many**

years, you have put in hard work no matter what, and you should be granted a bowl of rice in God's house just for being a laborer. I would say that the majority of you think this way, for you have always pursued the principle of how to take advantage of things and not be taken advantage of. Thus, I am telling you now in all seriousness: I do not care how meritorious your hard work is, how impressive your qualifications, how closely you follow Me, how renowned you are, or how much you have improved your attitude; as long as you have not met My demands, you will never be able to win My praise. Write off all those ideas and calculations of yours as soon as possible, and start treating My requirements seriously; otherwise, I will turn everyone to ash in order to bring an end to My work and, at worst turn My years of work and suffering into nothing, for I cannot bring My enemies and those people who reek of evil and have Satan's appearance into My kingdom or take them into the next age" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Transgressions Will Lead Man to Hell). "Ultimately, whether people can attain salvation is not dependent on what duty they do, but on whether they can understand and gain the truth, and on whether they can, in the end, entirely submit to God, put themselves at the mercy of His orchestration, give no consideration to their future and destiny, and become a qualified created being. God is righteous and holy, and these are the standards He uses to measure all mankind. These standards are immutable, and you must remember this. Inscribe these standards in your mind, and at any time, do not think of finding some other path to pursue some unreal thing. The requirements and standards God has for all who want to attain salvation are forever unchanging. They remain the same no matter who you are" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words are very clear. God does not

evaluate people based on the duties they do or how much capital they have, but on whether a person pursues the truth, and is able to submit to Him and let Him orchestrate as He wishes. This is what is most important. Without pursuing the truth, no matter how important my duty might be, how much I contributed, or how many people admired me, I would be unable to gain God's approval or salvation. This sickness revealed me completely. Because I lacked the truth and had distorted views, I had no faith in God or will to suffer, much less any love for God. When tried, I didn't reflect on myself or seek the truth, and just had the absurd idea that I was being tried because I had stature. When facing intense pain, I complained and wanted God to remove my sickness, to the point of not wanting to do my duty. In what way did I have any stature at all? I had no faith or submission whatsoever. As a person rebelling against and resisting God, I still wanted to receive His protection and blessings, and to be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven. How utterly shameless! I had performed my duties for many years and my work had attained some results, and I had gained the admiration of others, and I took these things as capital. I became arrogant and conceited, held no place for God in my heart, flaunted my qualifications, demanded what God should and shouldn't do, and felt qualified to bear witness to God. I was resisting God without even realizing it. This realization made my heart feel heavy. I asked myself what exactly I had been pursuing all this time if after all these years of faith I hadn't gained the truth. In my seeking, I read a passage of God's words: **"From beginning to end, what is the attitude of antichrists toward their duty? They believe doing one's duty is a transaction, that whoever expends the most in their duty, makes the biggest contribution to God's house and endures the most years in God's house will have a higher chance of being blessed and getting a crown in the end. This is the logic of antichrists. Is this logic correct?"**

(No.) Is this kind of perspective easy to reverse? It is not easy to reverse. This is decided by the nature essence of antichrists. In their hearts antichrists are averse to the truth, they do not seek the truth at all and are taking the wrong path, so their perspective of making transactions with God is not easy to reverse. Ultimately, antichrists do not believe God is the truth, they are disbelievers, they are here to speculate and gain blessings. For disbelievers to believe in God, this in itself is untenable, it is a preposterous thing, and they want to make a transaction with God and obtain blessings by enduring suffering and paying the price for God, this is an even more preposterous thing” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)).

In pondering God’s words, I realized that my not attaining the truth after all these years wasn’t because the truth favors other people, but because I had never put any effort into the truth and because I’d only pursued blessings and rewards. In all these years, I’d never sought or pondered what I should be pursuing in my faith, what path I should take, and what kind of person pleases God, and I’d rarely examined my intentions and views in doing my duty or the path I had taken. I had always been content to focus on work, thinking that if I did more work and attained more results, then God would surely bless me and be pleased with me, and that even if disasters struck, God would protect me and not let any harm befall me. Through the exposure of God’s words, I finally realized that my ideas followed the logic of an antichrist, were the transactional views of a disbeliever, and that I was trying to trick God and use Him to attain my own goals. This was resisting God! I thought of Paul in the Age of Grace. He spread the gospel to so many people, even throughout most of Europe, and he brought many people to faith. But all the things Paul did weren’t to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, nor to do the duties of a created being, but rather to use his spreading of the gospel to

bargain with God in exchange for a crown of righteousness. During his work, Paul always exalted himself and showed off, and his disposition became increasingly arrogant. He flaunted his qualifications before God and brazenly demanded from Him, saying, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7–8). He even bragged that he lived as Christ. In the end, because he resisted God and offended His disposition, Paul was punished. Were my views on pursuit and the path I was on not the same as Paul’s? I only wanted to pursue blessings and to use doing my duty to attain my goals. I was so selfish and despicable! Without this revelation, I would still not realize the seriousness of my corrupt disposition, and if I carried on, I would be spurned and eliminated by God. This realization filled me with guilt and I knelt in prayer, “Oh God! My sickness is due to Your righteousness and for the purpose of saving me. I am but an insignificant created being. You have exalted and graced me and given me the chance to do a duty, but I have been so arrogant and unreasonable. I was resisting and bargaining with You, yet I was unaware of it. Oh God, I don’t want to rebel against or resist You, I want to repent.”

Later, I wondered, “There’s another reason why I complained and couldn’t submit when I fell ill. It’s because I fear death. How can I resolve this problem?” I prayed and sought, and in God’s words I read: **“The matter of death has the same nature as other matters. It is not up to people to choose for themselves, much less can it be changed by the will of man. Death is the same as any other important event in life: It is entirely under the predestination and sovereignty of the Creator. If someone were to beg for death, they may not necessarily die; if they were to beg to live, they may not necessarily live. All this is under the sovereignty and predestination of God, and it is changed and decided**

by the authority of God, by God's righteous disposition, and by God's sovereignty and arrangements. Therefore, say you contract a serious illness, a potentially fatal serious illness, you will not necessarily die—who decides whether you will die or not? (God.) God decides. And since God decides and people cannot decide such a thing, what are people feeling anxious and distressed about? It's like who your parents are, and when and where you are born—these things cannot be chosen by you, either. The wisest choice in these matters is to let things take their natural course, to submit, and not to choose, not to expend any thought or energy on this matter, and not to feel distressed, anxious, or worried about it” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). God's words made me understand that whether I live or die from this sickness is all in God's hands and not up to any human. It's just like when I was born, the family I was born into, and what I look like aren't things that I can choose. Similarly, when and where I die is out of my hands. It all depends on God's sovereignty and predestination. If God predestined me to die of this sickness, then there's nothing I could do about it, and if it wasn't my time to die, then no matter how serious my disease became, I wouldn't die. My worries and concerns were unnecessary, and I couldn't change anything, they were just unneeded extra pain and burdens. I should give myself over to God, be at the mercy of His orchestrations and arrangements, and do my duty well. God says: **“Whether you are sick or in pain, as long as you have a single breath left, as long as you are still living, as long as you can still speak and walk, then you have the energy to perform your duty, and you should be well-behaved in the performance of your duty with your feet planted firmly on the ground. You must not abandon the duty of a created being or the responsibility given to you by the Creator. As long as you are not yet dead, you should**

complete your duty and fulfill it well” (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). From God’s words I understood that it is perfectly natural and justified for a created being to do a duty, just as it is right for children to show filial piety to their parents. Having the chance to do a duty in the church is God’s grace, and no matter if I live or die, and no matter how much pain I suffer, I should submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements and fulfill my responsibilities and duties. This is the only way to live a life of value and meaning. I also thought of Noah. After he had accepted God’s commission, God’s worries became his worries, and God’s thoughts became his thoughts. He never backed down no matter the pain or difficulties he faced, and after 120 years, he finished the ark and completed God’s commission. Noah’s loyalty and submission comforted God, and this is the example I should follow. This realization filled me with strength and I made a resolution: So long as I have air in my lungs, I will never abandon my duty or cast aside my responsibilities.

Afterward, I put my heart into my duty, no longer worried about whether my condition was worsening or if I would die. I thought that so long as I would live another day, I ought to do my duty well, so that even if I died one day, I would not have lived in vain. Sometimes I was so busy with my duties that I forgot I was even sick. I truly gained some appreciation of the words: **“To dwell in sickness is to be sick, but to dwell in the spirit is to be well”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). Before long, my symptoms subsided and my test results came back negative. I knew that this was all the mercy of God. I felt God’s love and salvation in this pandemic and I thank God from the bottom of my heart!

94. I Finally Broke Free From the Constraints of Poor Caliber

By Zhou Hui, China

In April 2020, I was elected to be a preacher and made responsible for the work of two churches. Although neither my caliber nor work capabilities were very good, I knew that the duty had been permitted by God, and so I was willing to rely on God and do my best to cooperate. With the gospel work spreading, the church urgently needed to cultivate gospel workers and waterers. I also had to participate in the text-based work and in the work of cleansing the church. I could only focus on one thing at a time, and I felt utterly overwhelmed. I also couldn't see through some issues, and none of the work was yielding any results. Faced with this situation, I felt immense pressure. I thought about the previous preacher. She had good caliber and work capabilities, and she'd been able to handle a lot of work. Compared to her, my caliber was far worse. With my poor caliber, I couldn't do any work well and might be dismissed any day. I felt really tormented. Later on, I sought ways to improve the efficiency of my duty. When I found a problem, I quickly noted it down and looked for the related truth principles. But after a while, the results still didn't improve. I just thought my caliber was poor and that no matter how hard I tried, this would be the best I could do. A while later, the upper leadership came to the church to conduct an opinion survey. When they saw that my caliber was poor and that I couldn't do actual work, they dismissed me.

After being dismissed, I felt really negative, and I thought to myself, "Why is my caliber so poor? If God had given me a better caliber, I wouldn't have done my duty so poorly. People with good caliber can handle a whole range of tasks wherever they go. These people accumulate more

good deeds and have a greater chance of being saved. My caliber is so poor that I can't do any work well. If I'm of no use in God's house and can't do my duty, I won't have any good deeds and won't have any hope of being saved." Later, the church arranged for me to take charge of gospel work, and I felt a bit hopeful, thinking, "I used to have all kinds of tasks to handle as a preacher, and I didn't do well due to my poor caliber. Now I should be able to do well in this single-task duty." Because I wasn't very familiar with gospel work, I made an effort to learn the relevant principles. After a while, I was able to handle some simple problems, but I couldn't see through some of the more complex issues. The gospel work still didn't yield any significant results, and so I became even more negative, thinking, "I can't even do this one task well. Is this it for me? Is God using this duty to reveal that my caliber is poor and that I'm useless? Is He planning to eliminate me? God's work is about to end, and if I can't do any duty well, there's no hope for me to be saved. Could it be that all these years of faith have been for nothing? Instead of hindering the gospel work here, I might as well resign and do some general affairs. Maybe I can still be a service-doer and survive." I felt really tormented, and spent my days sighing in despair and feeling unmotivated in my duty. I also felt unwilling to put effort into equipping myself with truths related to preaching the gospel, and I didn't want to seek the truth to resolve the corruptions I revealed. I felt that, given my poor caliber, pursuing further was futile. After this point, my state continued to worsen. I couldn't resolve problems, and the results of my work declined even further. By the end of each day, I'd feel exhausted both physically and mentally, and by eight or nine in the evening, I would start to feel drowsy. I became very passive in my duty, and on several occasions, I even forgot about the potential gospel recipients I needed to preach to. This made me even more negative. I told my daughter, "My caliber is so poor

that I can't do any duty well. You should keep on diligently pursuing, and I'll just take on the role of hosting you and render some service." My daughter then fellowshiped with me, "Mom, God never said that having poor caliber means a person cannot be saved. God loathes people's corrupt disposition. As long as a person pursues the truth, focuses on changing their disposition, and does their duty to the best of their abilities, they can still be saved, even with poor caliber. I've noticed that these days, you haven't been seeking God's intentions when things happen to you and that you've been complaining about your poor caliber constantly. This state of yours is quite dangerous, and if it's not resolved, in the end, you can't be saved, and it will be because you didn't pursue the truth, not because of your poor caliber." My daughter's words startled me. "That is right. During this time, with no results in my duty, I've been delimiting myself, thinking that because my caliber is poor, no matter how hard I pursue, it will be useless. I've also been unwilling to think through the difficulties in my duty, nor have I been willing to put effort into studying. I've been trapped in a negative state and unable to get out. If I keep being negative and delimiting myself, not doing my duty properly or seeking the truth, then it'll really be me eliminating myself. I need to seek God's intentions and resolve my issues right away." Later, I came before God to pray, "Oh God, I feel that with my poor caliber, I've been revealed as a useless person beyond salvation. I feel really negative and weak in this state. God, please guide me out of this wrong state."

Later on, I sought God's words related to my state. One day, I read these words of God: **"All people have some incorrect states within them, like negativity, weakness, despondency, and fragility; or they have base intents; or they are constantly troubled by their pride, selfish desires, and self-interest; or they think that they are of poor caliber, and they**

experience some negative states. It will be very hard for you to obtain the work of the Holy Spirit if you always live in these states. If it is hard for you to obtain the work of the Holy Spirit, then the active elements within you will be few, and the negative elements will come out and disturb you. People always rely on their own will to repress those negative and adverse states, but no matter how they repress them, they cannot shake them off. The main reason for this is that people cannot thoroughly discern these negative and adverse things; they cannot see their essence clearly. This makes it very hard for them to rebel against the flesh and Satan. Also, people always get stuck in these negative, melancholic, and degenerate states, and they do not pray or look up to God, instead they just muddle through them. As a result, the Holy Spirit does not work in them, and they are consequently unable to understand the truth, they lack a path in everything they do, and they cannot see any matter clearly. There are too many negative and adverse things within you, and they have filled your heart, so you are often negative, melancholic in spirit, and you stray farther and farther from God, and become weaker and weaker” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). What God exposed was my true state. In reality, God knows exactly what my caliber is like. After I was dismissed as a preacher, the church assigned me to handle gospel work, as they saw my inability to manage jobs that involved multiple tasks. But I was constantly constrained by my poor caliber, and when I saw no results in the gospel work, instead of summarizing the problems and seeking principles to figure out how to do my duty well, I thought God was revealing me as a useless person with no hope of being saved. I became so negative that I gave up entirely, failing even to do the duty I could. Not only was my life entry harmed, but my

duty was also delayed. If I continued being this negative, I would only continue to drift further away from God, and in the end, I really wouldn't be able to do any duty at all. That wouldn't be God revealing me, but rather me eliminating myself.

I then thought of God's words: **"Every person has the chance to be made perfect: Provided that you are willing, provided that you pursue, in the end you will be able to achieve this result, and not one of you will be forsaken. If you are of poor caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your poor caliber; if you are of high caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your high caliber; if you are ignorant and illiterate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your illiteracy; if you are literate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with the fact that you are literate; if you are elderly, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your age; if you are capable of providing hospitality, My requirements of you will be in accordance with this capability; if you say you cannot offer hospitality, and can only perform a certain function, whether it be spreading the gospel, or taking care of the church, or attending to other general affairs, My perfection of you will be in accordance with the function that you perform. Being loyal, submitting to the very end, and seeking to have supreme love for God—this is what you must accomplish, and there are no better practices than these three things"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). God's words touched me deeply. I saw that God's requirements for people aren't high, and no matter what their caliber is, everyone who comes before God enjoys the provision of God's words and has the opportunity to be saved. God saves people to the greatest extent. The caliber of a person is predetermined by God, and God knows exactly

what duties a person can handle. God does not disdain a person for being ignorant or for having poor caliber. His requirements are not one-size-fits-all. Instead, He arranges suitable duties for each person according to their caliber and sets requirements for them based on their caliber. As long as a person does their duty with wholehearted dedication and effort, then even if they don't meet the standards required by God, God will not condemn them, nor will He make the decision to abandon or eliminate them lightly. But when things happened to me, I didn't seek God's intentions. When I was dismissed as a preacher due to my poor caliber and saw no results in the gospel work I was supervising, I wallowed in negativity, thinking that my poor caliber made me a useless person. I gave up on myself and even thought about resigning. But in reality, God has never said that a poor caliber means a person can't be saved, nor has He ever set excessively high demands beyond a person's caliber. When my caliber was insufficient for duties that involved multiple tasks, the church assigned me to handle only gospel work according to my caliber, which provided me with an opportunity to train. If my duty yielded no results, I should have investigated the reasons why, put in more effort to make up for my shortcomings, and done my utmost to cooperate. Even if I were eventually dismissed due to incompetence, at least I would have no regrets. After realizing these things, I felt less constrained by my poor caliber in my duty. I began to equip myself with truths related to preaching the gospel and watch gospel films and videos. Whenever I didn't understand something, I would communicate and discuss it with my brothers and sisters. After training for a while, I began to see problems more clearly than before, I was able to provide actual guidance and help to my brothers and sisters in difficulty, and when there were deviations in the work, I would summarize

them with my brothers and sisters. Gradually, the gospel work began to show some improvement.

Later, I read a passage of God's words which gave me some more understanding of my problems. Almighty God says: **"There's a saying among nonbelievers: 'There's no such thing as a free lunch.' Antichrists also harbor this logic, thinking, 'If I work for you, what will you give me in return? What benefits can I obtain?' How should this nature be summed up? It's being driven by profits, putting profit before all else, and being selfish and despicable. This is the nature essence of antichrists. They believe in God solely for the purpose of obtaining profit and blessings. Even if they endure some suffering or pay some prices, it's all in order to make a deal with God. Their intention and desire to obtain blessings and rewards is immense, and they cling to it tightly. They don't accept any of the many truths that God has expressed, in their hearts they always think that believing in God is all about obtaining blessings and securing a good destination, that this is the highest principle, and that nothing can surpass it. They think that people should not believe in God unless for the sake of gaining blessings, and that if it wasn't for the sake of blessings, belief in God would have no meaning or value, that it would lose its meaning and value. Were these ideas instilled in antichrists by someone else? Do they derive from someone else's education or influence? No, they are determined by the inherent nature essence of antichrists, which is something no one can change"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). From God's words, I realized that my negativity and pain had been due to my excessive desire for blessings. I had been controlled by Satan's toxins, such as "Never lift a finger without a reward," and "Profit comes first." Everything I did was

driven by the pursuit of gain and was aimed at obtaining blessings. When I first found God, I would get up early and work late every day, willingly enduring suffering and expending myself, because I believed that greater diligence in my duty would lead to a beautiful destination. But when I was dismissed due to my poor caliber, I lost my motivation. I felt that issues of caliber weren't like corrupt dispositions that could be changed. I thought I was fixed in this state, not worth cultivating, just a useless person and destined to be eliminated. Especially when there were no results in the gospel work, I misunderstood God as revealing and eliminating me. I lived in a negative state and stopped striving to do the duties I could, and I even considered giving up my duty. I was truly without humanity! I saw that all these years I had been doing my duty just to gain blessings, and it was as if I were working for a boss out in the world, where if I was paid, I would work hard, and if not, I would quit. I wasn't pursuing the truth in my duty but was trying to use it to bargain for a good destination. I was trying to exploit and deceive God in this. My nature was utterly despicable and wicked, and this had truly made God detest me! Despite my poor caliber and deep corruption, God still gave me the opportunity to train, but I didn't cherish it or seek to do my duty well to satisfy God. Instead, I tried to bargain with Him. I was truly indebted to God! I was grateful that God had arranged this situation to reveal my intentions and views regarding my pursuit of blessings through my faith in God. This allowed me to recognize and correct my deviations in good time, otherwise, I would have continued pursuing blessings instead of pursuing the truth, and ultimately, I would really go beyond salvation.

There was also a passage of God's words that moved me deeply. Almighty God says: **“Though my caliber is low, I have an honest heart.”** These words sound very real, and speak of a requirement God makes of

people. What requirement? That if people are lacking in caliber, it is not the end of the world, but they must possess an honest heart, and if they do, they will be able to receive God's approval. No matter your situation or background, you must be an honest person, speak honestly, act honestly, be able to perform your duty with all your heart and mind, be loyal to your duty, not look to cut corners, not be a slippery or deceitful person, not lie or deceive, and not talk in circles. You must act according to the truth and be someone who pursues the truth. Many people think they are of poor caliber, and that they never fulfill their duty well or up to standard. They give their very best in what they do, but they can never grasp the principles, and still cannot produce very good results. Ultimately, all they can do is complain that they are too poor in caliber, and they become negative. So, is there no way forward when a person is of poor caliber? Being of poor caliber is not a fatal disease, and God never said He does not save people who are of poor caliber. As God said before, He is grieved by those who are honest but ignorant. What does it mean to be ignorant? Ignorance in many cases comes from being of poor caliber. When people are of poor caliber they have a shallow understanding of the truth. It is not specific or practical enough, and is often limited to a surface-level or literal understanding—it is limited to doctrine and regulations. That is why they cannot make sense of many problems, and can never grasp the principles while performing their duty, or do their duty well. Does God not want people of poor caliber then? (He does.) What path and direction does God point people toward? (That of being an honest person.) Can you be an honest person just by saying so? (No, you must have the manifestations of an honest person.) What are the manifestations of an honest person? Firstly, having no doubts about God's words. That is one of the

manifestations of an honest person. Apart from this, the most important manifestation is seeking and practicing the truth in all matters—this is most crucial. You say that you are honest, but you always push God’s words to the back of your mind and just do whatever you want. Is that the manifestation of an honest person? You say, ‘Although my caliber is poor, I have an honest heart.’ And yet when a duty falls to you, you are afraid of suffering and bearing responsibility if you do not do it well, so you make excuses to shirk your duty or suggest that someone else do it. Is this the manifestation of an honest person? Clearly, it is not. How, then, should an honest person behave? They should submit to God’s arrangements, be loyal to the duty they are supposed to perform, and strive to satisfy God’s intentions. This manifests itself in several ways: One is accepting your duty with an honest heart, not considering your fleshly interests, not being half-hearted about it, and not plotting for your own benefit. Those are manifestations of honesty. Another is putting all your heart and strength into performing your duty well, doing things properly, and putting your heart and love into your duty to satisfy God. These are the manifestations an honest person should have while performing their duty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God’s words, I understood that although people with poor caliber may have shallower understanding of problems, if they have an honest heart, genuinely seek the truth, and do their duty with all their heart and strength, their life can gradually improve, and in the end, they can be saved. My caliber was indeed poor. I tended to only see the surface of problems and was unable to apply principles flexibly. But God says that poor caliber isn’t a fatal disease, and so long as I can practice being an honest person according to God’s requirements, pray to God and rely on Him more on the

issues I can't see through, put effort into equipping myself with the relevant truths, and proactively seek fellowship with those who understand the truth when facing difficulties, I can make up for my shortcomings and attain some results in my duty. I also thought about the preacher I admired. She had been able to fellowship the truth to solve problems and gain results in her duty, but this was because she had diligently cooperated in her duty and received the work of the Holy Spirit. But later she lived in a corrupt disposition, vying for fame and gain, and not attending to her proper work, and her duty came to yield no results. Even when brothers and sisters provided fellowship and help, she didn't repent, and in the end, she was dismissed and eliminated. This showed that even if one has good caliber, if they don't pursue the truth, they won't receive the work of the Holy Spirit and can't achieve good results in their duty. Although my caliber was poor, it wasn't so poor that I couldn't comprehend the truth or understand anything. For example, in my gospel duty, if I didn't focus on my future prospects but conscientiously did my duty, and put in effort to learn and understand what I didn't know, I could still achieve some results in my duty. I saw that my previous belief that "Poor caliber means a person can't do their duty well and can't be saved, and only those with good caliber can be saved" was completely absurd and fallacious and didn't accord with the truth at all!

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"God has expressed so many words, and before He did, He did a great deal of preparatory work. If in the end, you do not pursue or enter these words now that He has expressed them, how will God view you? What sort of designation will God assign you? This is plain as day. So, every person, no matter your caliber, or age, or the number of years you have believed in God, should put your efforts toward the path of pursuing the truth. You**

shouldn't emphasize any objective rationales; you should pursue the truth unconditionally. Don't idle your days away. If you seek and put your efforts toward the pursuit of the truth as the great matter of your life, it may be that the truth you gain and can reach in your pursuit is not what you'd have wished for. But if God says He will give you a proper destination depending on your attitude in your pursuit and your sincerity, then how wonderful that will be! For now, don't focus on what your destination or outcome will be, or what will happen and what the future holds, or whether you will be able to avoid disaster and not die—don't think of these things or ask for them. Concentrate only on pursuing the truth in God's words and His requirements, on performing your duty well, and on satisfying God's intentions, so that you will not prove unworthy of God's six thousand years of waiting, His six thousand years of anticipation. Give God some comfort; let Him see some hope for you, and let His wishes be realized in you. Tell Me, would God mistreat you if you did so? Of course not! And even if the end results aren't as one would have wished, how should they treat that fact, as a created being? They should submit in all things to God's orchestrations and arrangements, without any personal agenda. Is this not the perspective created beings should take? (It is.) That's the right mindset'' (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. Why Man Must Pursue the Truth).

From God's words, I saw that God is righteous, and that He determines a person's outcome based on whether they have the truth. Although my caliber was poor, I shouldn't have been negatively delimiting myself. I had to keep striving, pursue the truth, and seek changes in my disposition. I had to fulfill my responsibilities in my duty and make every effort to do my best, and regardless of whether I would have a favorable outcome and destination in the end, I had to submit to God's sovereignty and

arrangements. This was the reason that I, as a created being, had to have. Reflecting on my experiences, whether as a preacher or in doing gospel duty, my lack of results wasn't entirely due to my poor caliber, but because I was constantly delimiting myself, believing that poor caliber was a fatal disease, and because I didn't strive to improve or put effort into equipping myself with the truth. When I couldn't see through problems, I didn't seek the truth or fellowship with others, so as a result, I made no progress. In the future, regardless of the problems I would encounter at work, I couldn't be constrained by my poor caliber any longer, I had to face them correctly and seek the truth for solutions. Regarding the truths I didn't understand or the issues I couldn't see through, I should actually pay more price to equip myself and learn. As long as I sincerely cooperated with God, I would definitely make progress. When I thought about it this way, I felt more at ease and steadfast in my duty. In the past, I'd often speak about my poor caliber, and those words, "poor caliber," were like a curse binding me tightly, causing me to wallow in bitterness and exhaustion and make no progress in life. Now, I felt a sense of liberation in my heart. Moving forward, in doing my duty, I focused on practicing according to God's words, and for my shortcomings and deficiencies, I would equip myself with the relevant truth principles. For things I didn't understand, I would pray to God and learn from experienced sisters. This way, I came to feel God's guidance in my duty, grasp principles better, and I gained a clearer understanding of issues that had previously been opaque, and the gospel work also yielded some results. Although I still have many deficiencies, I am willing to rely on God to do my duty well. Thank God!

95. The Consequences of Never Doubting Those Whom You Employ

By Abby, USA

I served as a gospel deacon in the church. Besides spreading the gospel myself, I also supervised and followed up on the duty performance of gospel workers. As for those who were apt to be perfunctory in their duties, I would keep a close eye on them. For example, I carefully understood their potential gospel recipients' situations and the ways they fellowshiped and testified. Sometimes when I found that they were not responsible in their duties, I would prune them and expose their problems. However, for some brothers and sisters who had been generally diligent in their duties, I would only ask briefly whether they encountered any difficulties. I never considered whether they might fail to fulfill their responsibilities or slack off. I even thought, "If I follow up on their work too closely, will they think I don't trust them? If they develop negative opinions of me, it will be awkward to get along with them." Therefore, I seldom followed up on or supervised their work in detail.

One day, I received a message from the sister collaborating with me. She reported that Sonia was not responsible as a gospel spreader, retreating at the sight of difficulties, and causing delays in the work. I was surprised at this message, wondering, "Could there be a mistake? Sonia is usually quite diligent in her duties. How was it possible for her to have these problems?" Although I promised to look into it, I did not believe that such things had really happened. So, I only briefly asked Sonia about her situation of preaching the gospel. She told me that recently she had encountered some difficulties in preaching the gospel. Some of her potential gospel recipients had many religious notions, while others did not respond to her messages.

At that time, I thought, “Should I check her work to see whether there are any issues?” But then I thought, “Sonia usually has a good attitude toward her duties. If I check her work thoroughly, will she feel I don’t trust her and cast doubt on her? If so, it will be so awkward when we see each other every day! If she develops a negative opinion of me, it will be hard to collaborate with her in the future. Besides, Sonia used to be a gospel deacon, so, she should know how to work to achieve results. She won’t be irresponsible and retreat at difficulties. Since she mentioned some reasons, she must indeed be facing difficulties.” So, I didn’t inquire into it further. A few days later, the sister collaborating with me again reported that Sonia was not responsible in preaching the gospel, not putting effort into fellowshipping and testifying to the potential gospel recipients. This time, I felt that something was off. Since the sister collaborating with me had continuously reported Sonia’s problems, I could no longer ignore it. So, I immediately had a talk with Sonia, asking for detailed situations about each potential gospel recipient. This check indeed exposed some problems. Some of her potential gospel recipients had attended two or three gatherings, but she knew nothing about their situations, and she was unaware of their problems and notions. For some potential gospel recipients, she just sent them some brief greeting messages, with no further follow-up and fellowship. She even gave up quite a few suitable potential gospel recipients. Seeing these issues, I was shocked. Sonia’s behavior was completely different from what she had impressed me. In my impression, she was diligent and responsible in her duties, so I had great trust in her when I followed up on her work, thinking she wouldn’t have any problems. Even when I noticed some issues with her, I didn’t take them seriously. I began to question myself: Why did I trust her so much? Why didn’t I follow up and understand her work in detail as I did with others? I felt deeply

reproached. Although I had now discovered her problems, after all, it was too late to remedy the losses that had already been caused.

In reflection, I read a passage of God's words: **"False leaders have a fatal flaw: They are quick to trust people based on their own imaginings. And this is caused by not understanding the truth, is it not? How does God's word reveal the essence of corrupt humankind? Why should they trust in people when God doesn't? False leaders are too arrogant and self-righteous, are they not? What they think is, 'I couldn't have misjudged this person, there shouldn't be any problems with this person that I've judged to be suitable; they are definitely not someone who indulges in eating, drinking and entertainment, or who likes comfort and hates hard work. They are absolutely dependable and trustworthy. They will not change; if they did, that would mean I was wrong about them, wouldn't it?' What kind of logic is this? Are they some kind of expert? Do they have x-ray vision? Do they have that special skill? You could live with a person for one or two years, but would you be able to see who they really are without a suitable environment to lay their nature essence utterly bare? If they were not revealed by God, you could live side-by-side with them for three, or even five, years, and would still struggle to see just what kind of nature essence they have. And how much more is that true when you rarely see them, are rarely with them? False leaders blithely trust a person based on a fleeting impression or someone else's positive appraisal of them, and dare to entrust the work of the church to such a person. In this, are they not being extremely blind? Are they not acting recklessly? And when they work like this, are the false leaders not being extremely irresponsible?"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (3)). God exposes that false leaders are

irresponsible in their work, and that they are arrogant and self-righteous, thinking that they can judge people accurately and so they blindly trust people, which leads to losses in the work. I had also been irresponsible regarding Sonia. I'd thought that because she had previously served as a gospel deacon and had received fairly good evaluations for her past duties, she probably wouldn't cause any problems. I had felt reassured and let her do things without supervision, so I had just gone through the motions whenever I checked her work. When flaws had arisen in the work and the sister collaborating with me had reported Sonia's problems, I still didn't believe it, thinking that Sonia wasn't that kind of person. I would just ask how things were going as a formality, and blindly trusted Sonia based on some excuses she came up with. It wasn't until the sister collaborating with me reminded me a second time that I belatedly followed up on Sonia's work. But by then, the damage had already been done. God requires supervisors to supervise and follow up on work. However, I had just blindly trusted people, without doing actual work. I had been truly irresponsible! This realization filled me with remorse and guilt.

Later, I continued to seek guidance—why hadn't I supervised Sonia's work? During devotionals, I read a passage of God's words: **“The phrase ‘Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt’ is one that most people have heard before. Do you believe this phrase to be correct or incorrect? (Incorrect.) Since you believe it to be incorrect, why is it still able to influence you in real life? When these sorts of matters befall you, this view will emerge. It will disturb you to some extent, and once it disturbs you, your work will be compromised. So, if you believe it to be incorrect and have determined that it is incorrect, then why are you still influenced by it and why do you still use it to comfort yourself? (Because people do not understand the truth, they fall**

short of practicing according to God's words, so they will take Satan's philosophy for worldly dealings as their principle or criterion for practicing.) **This is one of the reasons. Are there others?** (Because this phrase is relatively in line with people's fleshly interests, and they will naturally act according to this phrase when they don't understand the truth.) **People are not only like this when they don't understand the truth; even when they do understand the truth, they might not be able to practice according to the truth. It is correct that this phrase is 'relatively in line with people's fleshly interests.'** People would rather follow a cunning trick or a satanic philosophy for worldly dealings to protect their own fleshly interests than practice the truth. Besides, they have a basis for doing this. What is this basis? It is that this phrase is broadly accepted by the masses as being right. When they do things in accordance with this phrase, their actions can be valid in front of all others and they can be free from criticism. Whether viewed from a moral or legal perspective, or from the perspective of traditional notions, it is a view and practice that holds water. Thus, when you are unwilling to practice the truth or when you do not understand it, you would rather offend God, violate the truth, and retreat to a place that doesn't cross a moral bottom line. And what is this place? It is the bottom line that you 'neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt.' Retreating to this place and acting in accordance with this phrase will give you peace of mind. Why does it give you peace of mind? It is because everyone else also thinks this way. Moreover, your heart also harbors the notion that the law cannot be enforced when everyone is an offender, and you think, 'Everyone thinks this way. If I practice according to this phrase, it won't matter if God condemns me, since I cannot see God or touch the Holy Spirit anyway. At least in the

eyes of others, I'll be seen as a person with human traits, someone with a bit of conscience.' You choose to betray the truth for the sake of these 'human traits,' for the sake of having people look upon you without hostility in their eyes. Everyone will then think good of you, you won't be criticized, and you'll live a comfortable life and have peace of mind —what you seek is peace of mind. Is this peace of mind a manifestation of a person's love for the truth? (No, it is not.) So, what kind of disposition is this? Does it harbor deceitfulness? Yes, there is deceitfulness in it" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus One: What the Truth Is). Viewing myself in light of God's words, I realized that my failure to supervise Sonia's work stemmed from my being governed by the satanic philosophy for worldly dealings of "Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt." I had thought that employing someone meant they would be beyond doubt; otherwise, it would mean not trusting them. I had been worried that if I looked into Sonia's work in detail, she might feel I didn't trust her and develop a bias against me. So, I hadn't followed up on her work and had failed to fulfill my responsibility, causing delays in the work. I had used the seemingly legitimate justification of "Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt" as an excuse not to supervise and check the work, just to avoid offending someone so that I could protect my reputation and status. What I had revealed was my selfish and deceitful satanic disposition. Although I believed in and followed God, ate and drank His words and did my duty, I hadn't regarded the words of God as principles for my comportment and actions, and when things had befallen me, I had still relied on satanic philosophies to handle them, neglecting to supervise or inspect the work and failing to fulfill my responsibilities in my duty. I had resisted and betrayed God. This realization

scared me, and I also recognized that living by satanic philosophies could only harm me.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"Do you believe the view 'Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt' is correct? Is this phrase the truth? Why would he use this phrase in the work of God's house and in doing his duty? What is the problem here? 'Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt' are clearly the words of the nonbelievers, words that come from Satan—so why does he treat them as the truth? Why can't he tell if these words are right or wrong? These are patently the words of man, the words of corrupt humankind, they are simply not the truth, they are utterly at odds with the words of God, and should not serve as the criterion for people's actions, comportment, and worship of God. So how should this phrase be approached? If you are truly capable of discernment, what kind of truth principle should you use in its place to serve as your principle of practice? It should be to 'perform your duty with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' To act with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind is to be constrained by no one; it is to be of a single heart and mind, and no more. This is your responsibility and your duty, and you should perform it well, as doing this is perfectly natural and justified. Whatever problems you encounter, you should act according to the principles. Handle them however you ought to; if pruning is called for, so be it, and if dismissal is called for, so be it. In short, act based on God's words and on the truth. Isn't this the principle? Is this not the exact opposite of the phrase 'Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt'? What does it mean to neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt? It means that if you have**

employed a person, you should not doubt them, you should let go of the reins, not supervise them, and let them do as they please; and if you doubt them, then you should not employ them. Is this not what it means? This is terribly wrong. Humankind has been deeply corrupted by Satan. Every person has a satanic disposition, and is capable of betraying God and resisting God. You could say that no one is reliable. Even if a person swears to the end of the earth, it is of no use because people are constrained by their corrupt dispositions and cannot control themselves. They must accept God's judgment and chastisement before they can resolve the problem of their corrupt disposition, and thoroughly resolve the problem of them resisting and betraying God—resolve the root of people's sins. All those who have not gone through God's judgment and purification and achieved salvation are not reliable. They are not worthy of trust. Therefore, when you use someone, you must supervise and direct them. Also, you must prune them and frequently fellowship on the truth, and only in this way will you be able to see clearly whether they can continue to be used. If there are some people who can accept the truth, accept pruning, are able to perform their duty loyally, and who have continual progress in their life, then only these people are truly usable” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus One: What the Truth Is). God's words point out a path of practice to people. Regardless of whether it would harm my personal reputation or interests, doing my duty according to God's requirements is the principle I should uphold. As a supervisor, supervising and following up on work is my job. No matter who they are, as long as they fall within the area I am responsible for, I must supervise and follow up on them. If I see them being perfunctory, irresponsible, or violating principles, I should help them, correct them, and prune them. If they still don't make amends, they need to

be reassigned or dismissed. I shouldn't let go of the reins and blindly trust people, as these are manifestations of being irresponsible and foolish. We have been deeply corrupted by Satan and often live according to our corrupt dispositions, being perfunctory in our duties and resorting to trickery in order to slack off. Before our corrupt dispositions are cleansed, no one can be relied upon. Therefore, people need leaders and workers to supervise them. This is also in order to urge people to better do their duties. Although Sonia used to be a gospel deacon and was usually diligent and responsible in her duty, after being dismissed, she had been living in the state of delimiting herself as having poor caliber. She had become somewhat negative and passive in her new duty, leading to much work not being completed in good time. Without her work being followed up on or supervised, I hadn't been able to discover or address the problem of her state in time.

I read another passage of God's words and gained some paths to follow in doing actual work. God says: **"No matter what important work a leader or worker does, and what the nature of this work is, their number one priority is to understand and grasp how work is going on. They must be there in person to follow up on things and ask questions, getting their information first-hand. They must not simply rely on hearsay or listen to other people's reports. Instead, they must observe with their own eyes the situation of the personnel and how work is progressing, and understand what difficulties there are, whether any areas are at odds with requirements of the Above, whether there are violations of principles, whether there exist any disturbances or disruptions, whether there is a lack of necessary equipment or related instructional materials regarding professional work—they must stay on top of all of this. No matter how many reports they listen to, or how**

much they glean from hearsay, neither of these beats paying a personal visit; it is more accurate and reliable for them to see things with their own eyes. Once they are familiar with all aspects of the situation, they will have a good idea of what's going on" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). From God's words, I understood that when doing work, we cannot blindly trust people or let go of the reins after assigning tasks. We must personally supervise and check people's work. Moreover, it's not enough to check just once; we need to look into it over a period of time. We should be clear in our minds about the progress and specific situation of the brothers and sisters' work. Only this way can we promptly identify their issues and fellowship to turn things aright. Otherwise, they might cause losses in the work. Realizing this, I prayed to God, expressing my willingness to repent, to do my duty according to God's requirements, and to do my job well. During the following days, when I followed up on the work, I consciously looked into how the brothers' and sisters' work was going, and regardless of their background, or their experience in preaching the gospel, I supervised and followed up on them in the same way.

Later, I needed to follow up on Sister Lydia's work. She had collaborated with me before, and initially, I thought, "She knows how to do things. Maybe she doesn't need my supervision." But when this thought arose, I realized it was wrong. I couldn't do my duty based on the satanic philosophy of "Never doubt those you employ" anymore. So I made a conscious effort to look into how Lydia's work was going. One time, I noticed a decline in the results of her work. Initially I gave her a reminder, but there was no significant improvement afterward. So I got directly involved in the work she was responsible for. I talked to the brothers and sisters, seeking to understand the actual situation of the work, and I actually

ended up discovering some issues. After I pointed them out to Lydia, the effectiveness of her duty improved somewhat. Lydia also said that such supervision and inspection of her work were beneficial, as she had indeed been procrastinating in her duty recently. She also said that this supervision served to remind and urge her along. Practicing this way, I also felt more at ease. These realizations and transformations I have experienced are all the result of the guidance of God's words. I am so grateful to God!

96. Freed From Jealousy

By Claude, Cameroon

At the beginning of 2021, I was serving as a preacher and was partnered with Brother Matthew to preside over church work. I had just started in that duty and there was still much I didn't understand, so I often came to him with questions. During that time, Matthew would often tell me about the corrupt dispositions he revealed in his duty. Over time, I came to look down on him. I thought I wasn't as corrupt as him, and it wasn't beneficial for me to be partnered with him. I thought I was better than him. I even thought, "How did he become a preacher first? I used to be his leader. I should be the one telling him how to be a preacher, not the other way around. Since he became a preacher first, everyone thinks more highly of him." I just couldn't accept this, and I believed I could do better than him. To excel above him, I would often compare our work. For instance, when Matthew told me he didn't have enough time to keep up with all of his work, I'd be happy, knowing that I had already caught up on all the work I was responsible for and, thus, the upper leadership would think more highly of me. To my surprise, however, Matthew did a great job on the work he was responsible for. One day, the leader assigned us to identify some people that could be cultivated as waterers. In just two days, Matthew had already found 3 candidates. I panicked, thinking, "I've gotta get going. At the very least I need to match Matthew's numbers. Otherwise, he'll earn more praise than me." So, in just three days, I found seven people. I felt very satisfied because I'd done better than Matthew. But when the leader came to ask me about the candidates' situations, he concluded that none of them were suitable to serve as waterers because I hadn't understood their actual situations when I was identifying them as candidates. But Matthew's

candidates were all considered suitable—they had caliber, good humanity, they loved the truth and were willing to expend themselves for God. Those past three days of work had all been in vain and I felt so down. I also began to feel jealous of Matthew. Why did he always get such good results in his duty? And why didn't I? He would enthusiastically share God's words in our groups, and would even follow up on the work I was responsible for—there was just no way to distinguish myself with him around. I was so fed up with him and even began to hate him. Why did I have to do my duty with him? I didn't want him to be so noticeable and I wished he wouldn't get results in his work. I kept vying for fame and didn't change my ways.

During that time, I was supervising the work of Sister Anais, who was a church leader. She was in a bad state because she wasn't doing well with her duty, and so my leader had me go give her some support. But when I contacted her, she told me that she'd already sought out Matthew to seek and fellowship, and Matthew had already shared God's words with her and helped her resolve her issue. This made me feel like I had no function. I was very unhappy that Matthew had meddled in my work. This church leader was under my supervision and I didn't want people to think that I wasn't fulfilling my duty and resolving issues. The more I thought about it, the angrier I got and I really didn't want to partner with Matthew anymore. I wanted to work on my own because then I could make people notice me. After that, I tried to avoid him while doing my duties. One time, Matthew asked me to discuss a problem we would fellowship on in a gathering. He called and texted me, but I intentionally ignored him. I didn't want to discuss anything with him. When he asked me questions about work situations, I wouldn't respond in a timely fashion, and when he asked me to fellowship at the gathering, I intentionally kept quiet and left him to fellowship himself. I thought to myself, "After all, as long as you're here,

the brothers and sisters won't notice me. So what's the point of me fellowshipping?" During one gathering, Matthew asked me for my opinion after he'd finished fellowshipping. I thought he had fellowshipped too much and had said everything I had wanted to say, so I was pretty unhappy. So, I said to him, "You're fellowshipping with an arrogant disposition. You didn't expose your own corrupt nature, and just vaguely discussed some of your understanding. You only gave an outline, but failed to discuss details." I knew what I'd said wasn't accurate—I'd said it intentionally. I just wanted to tamp down on his enthusiasm, so that he wouldn't speak as much in future gatherings. When he'd send me messages asking how I was doing or regarding other things, I wouldn't respond. I thought then he'd know that I didn't want to partner with him. I even wanted him to stop sending me messages. I just wanted him to leave and give me some room to put my talents to play. I also wanted to do my duty full-time like him, so that whenever the brothers and sisters needed me, I would be there for them right away. That way they'd all think highly of me. So I wanted to quit my worldly job and devote myself completely to my duty, but I still needed work to make a living and support my family. I felt quite frustrated that I couldn't devote myself full-time to my duty like Matthew. I even thought, "I might as well quit being a preacher. That way I won't have to partner with Matthew. I won't be influenced by him if I switch to a different duty and I'll have chances to distinguish myself." But when I actually considered quitting, I felt a bit guilty and didn't know what to do. I prayed to God, asking Him to help me understand my state. I thought of a passage of God's words that says: **"Duties come from God; they are the responsibilities and commissions that God entrusts to man. How, then, should man understand them? 'Since this is my duty and the commission that God has entrusted to me, it is my obligation and responsibility. It is only**

right that I accept it as my bounden duty. I can't decline or refuse it; I can't pick and choose. What falls to me is certainly what I ought to do. It's not that I'm not entitled to make a choice—it's that I shouldn't make a choice. This is the reason that a created being ought to have"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through God's words, I realized that our duties are bestowed by God. I should hold to my duty and fulfill my responsibilities. I shouldn't evade responsibilities and be choosy. This was the reason I ought to have. As for me, because my ambitious desire to surpass Matthew hadn't been satisfied, I wanted to quit my duty. This was so hurtful to God! I didn't treat my duty as a responsibility, but rather as a way of distinguishing myself, and a means of winning respect and admiration. I wanted to quit my job and go full-time in my duty not in order to satisfy God in fulfilling that duty, but rather to vie for status with my partner and surpass him. When I wasn't able to do my duty full-time due to actual concerns, I wanted to switch to a different duty to get a chance to distinguish myself. Reality showed me that everything that I did wasn't really in order to do my duty, but rather to use my duty as an opportunity to vie for status. God detests such behavior.

Later on, I came across some of God's words: **"Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. People act for the sake of their families, sons and daughters, for their careers, future prospects, position, vainglory, and money, for the sake of food, clothing, and the flesh. But is there anyone whose actions are truly for the sake of God? Even among those who act for the sake of God, there are but few who know God. How many people do not act out of their own interests?**

How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position? And so, God has been forcibly sentenced to death innumerable times, and countless barbaric judges have condemned God and once more nailed Him to the cross. How many can be called righteous because they truly act for the sake of God?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Evil Will Surely Be Punished). **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God’s house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God’s intentions, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God’s house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). Through God’s words, I came to understand my current state. God says: **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness!”** These words were

really true, and they exposed my actual state. When I saw that my partner got better results in his duty than me, and was better at resolving brothers' and sisters' issues, I just felt like he was better than me and I'd never distinguish myself with him there. So I felt jealous of him and excluded him and didn't want to partner with him. I intentionally ignored his messages and didn't answer his phone calls. When he fellowshiped on his experiential understanding, I didn't cooperate with him to maintain church life, instead trying to pick out his flaws. I even intentionally called him arrogant and attacked him so that he'd be less enthusiastic and would stop distinguishing himself and surpassing me. I was so malicious. Each time I had to perform my duty with him, I'd feel so tormented. I always wanted to compete with him and was completely incapable of maintaining my calm. It was just like God has said: **"Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end?"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Evil Will Surely Be Punished).

Because my desire for fame and status was never satisfied, I began to hate my partner. I only wanted to get away from and rid myself of him so I could work on my own. I even thought about quitting my duty. I realized I was malicious and lacking in humanity. In doing my duty, I only ever considered myself, not the church's work. Even if the church's work was delayed, I wouldn't be worried or anxious. How selfish and despicable I was! I also thought about why I couldn't just have a simple and harmonious partnership with Matthew. I realized that in my faith, I had set foot on a wrong path because of my satanic disposition. If I didn't seek the truth and resolve my corrupt disposition, I would lose the work of the Holy Spirit and descend into darkness. I prayed to God several times, asking that He help me understand and resolve my corrupt disposition.

Then, I saw a passage of God's words: **"What is the motto of antichrists, no matter what group they are in? 'I must compete! Compete! Compete! I must compete to be the highest and greatest!'"** This is the disposition of antichrists; everywhere they go, they compete and try to achieve their aims. They are the lackeys of Satan, and they disturb the work of the church. The disposition of antichrists is like this: They begin by looking around the church to see who has believed in God for many years and has capital, who has some gifts or talents, who has been of benefit to the brothers and sisters in their life entry, who has more prestige, who has seniority, who is well spoken of among the brothers and sisters, who has more positive things. Those people are to be their competition. In sum, every time antichrists are among a group of people, this is what they always do: They compete for status, compete for a good reputation, compete to have the final say over matters and the right to make decisions in the group, which, once they have gained it, makes them happy. ... That is how conceited, odious, and unreasonable the disposition of antichrists is. They have neither conscience nor reason, nor even a shred of the truth. One can see in the actions and deeds of an antichrist that what they do has none of the reason of a normal person, and though one may fellowship about the truth to them, they do not accept it. However right what you say is, it does not fly with them. The only thing they like to pursue is reputation and status, which they hold in reverence. So long as they can enjoy the benefits of status, they are contented. This, they believe, is the value of their existence. Regardless of what group of people they are among, they have to show people the 'light' and 'warmth' they provide, their talents, their uniqueness. And it is because they believe they are special that they naturally think that they should be treated better than

ordinary people, that they should receive people's support and admiration, that people should look up to them, worship them—they think all of this is their due. Are such people not brazen and shameless? Is it not trouble to have such people present in the church?" (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). Through God's words, I became aware of the severity of my actions. It turned out that, in seeking fame, status and the admiration of others in my duty, I was revealing an antichrist disposition. When I saw that Matthew's fellowship of the truth was enlightening, that he got results in his duty and the brothers and sisters all praised him and went to him with questions, I felt jealous of him. In order to surpass him and gain a place in others' hearts, I even thought about quitting my job to go full-time in my duty so I could be there the moment anyone needed me to resolve their problems. That way the brothers and sisters would think highly of me and there'd no longer be a special place for my partner in their hearts. Each time I performed duties with Matthew, I always felt like I was living in his shadow and I had no chance to distinguish myself. I didn't like how he always won the admiration and praise of the brothers and sisters in any way, and I even hoped that no one would respond to him when he sent messages in the group chat. Because of him, none of the brothers and sisters noticed me, so I spent all my time competing with him, hoping to surpass him and make the brothers and sisters admire and worship me. This was the kind of behavior I'd often reveal in my bid to win fame and status. When my ambition and desire wasn't satisfied time and again, I thought that I didn't have any chance of distinguishing myself, and wanted to quit being a preacher, thinking that I'd have a chance to make a name for myself in a different duty. I realized that my obsession with fame and status was out of control. I was just like an antichrist in my love of fame and status—this desire was rooted deep within

me, it was intrinsic to my nature. I realized that the path I was walking was extremely dangerous. God's disposition is unoffendable—He is righteous. If I didn't seek to make changes, and only focused on vying for fame and status without the slightest thought to the church's work, I would be spurned and eliminated by God. I felt a deep disgust for myself and no longer wanted to vie for fame and status with my partner. I prayed to God, asking that He help me break free from the fetters and constraints of my satanic disposition.

I then came across this passage of God's words: **“Regardless of what the direction or target of your pursuit is, if you do not reflect on the pursuit of status and reputation, and if you find it very difficult to put these things aside, then they will affect your life entry. As long as status has a place in your heart, it will totally control and influence your life's direction and the goals you strive for, in which case it will be very difficult for you to enter the truth reality, to say nothing of achieving changes in your disposition; whether you are ultimately able to gain God's approval, of course, goes without saying. What's more, if you are never able to put aside your pursuit of status, this will affect your ability to adequately do your duty, which will make it very difficult for you to become an acceptable created being. Why do I say this? God loathes nothing more than when people pursue status, because the pursuit of status is a satanic disposition, it is a wrong path, it is born of the corruption of Satan, it is something condemned by God, and it is the very thing that God judges and purifies. God loathes nothing more than when people pursue status, and yet you still mulishly compete for status, you unfailingly cherish and protect it, always trying to take it for yourself. And in nature, is all of this not antagonistic to God? Status is not ordained for people by God; God provides people with the truth,**

the way, and the life, and ultimately makes them become an acceptable created being, a small and insignificant created being—not someone who has status and prestige and is revered by thousands of people. And so, no matter what perspective it is viewed from, the pursuit of status is a dead end. No matter how reasonable your excuse for pursuing status is, this path is still the wrong one, and is not approved of by God. No matter how hard you try or how great the price you pay, if you desire status, God will not give it to you; if it's not given by God, you will fail in fighting to obtain it, and if you keep fighting there will only be one outcome: You will be revealed and eliminated, and you will meet with a dead end" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). Through God's words, I saw that my continual pursuit of status not only hampered my ability to do my duty well, it also prevented me from meeting the standard as a created being. Because I was always seeking status, always trying to surpass Matthew and gain everyone's admiration, and always vying and competing, I became more and more malicious and lacking in normal humanity. I saw how seeking fame and status is not the right path, and how it is a God-opposing road to ruin. Given that I took myself to be a believer and a created being, I should focus on pursuing the truth and stop struggling over something as useless as the pursuit of fame and status. Only then could I avoid doing evil and resisting God. So I prayed to God, saying, "Dear God! I've come to recognize my own satanic nature. Due to my obsession with reputation and status, I often feel jealous of Matthew and don't want to partner with him. Dear God! I'm willing to repent to You and not seek fame and status anymore. I only wish to pursue the truth properly and do my duty well. Please guide and help me, God."

During my devotionals, I came upon this passage of God's words: **"What are your principles for conducting yourselves? You should**

conduct yourselves according to your station, find the right place for you, and perform the duty that you ought to; only this is someone with reason. By way of example, there are people who are adept at certain professional skills and have a grasp of principles, and they should take on the responsibility and make the final checks in that area; there are people who can provide ideas and insights, inspiring others and helping them to perform their duties better—then they should provide ideas. If you can find the right place for you and work in harmony with your brothers and sisters, you will be fulfilling your duty, and you will be conducting yourself according to your station” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). God’s words gave me a path of practice. “I’m an ordinary person—I should be seeking to become a true created being, to stand in my proper place, work harmoniously with others and do my duty to the best of my ability. Only this is the right path.” I thought of how when God had Adam give names to the animals, He assented to the names that Adam came up with—He didn’t reject Adam and come up with His own names to show how much greater He was, but accepted Adam’s choices. This showed me that God’s humbleness and hiddenness are truly lovable. God is supreme, the Creator, and yet He humbly conceals Himself. As for me, I was just a common created being, but I always liked to show off to win the respect of others, and even tried to suppress those who got good results in their duty for the sake of my own status and reputation. I was just too arrogant and unreasonable! I felt so regretful for what I’d done, so I came before God to repent and prayed to Him, asking that He give me the bravery to expose myself in front of my partner.

Later on, I plucked up my courage and apologized to Matthew, exposing my antichrist disposition which manifested in my desire to

secretly vie with him for fame and status. After practicing in that way, I felt much more peaceful. Later on, Matthew found some of God's words that were relevant to my state and they were really helpful for me. I was just so grateful to God! I prayed to Him and resolved that I would conduct myself as He asked. After that, I stopped ignoring my partner's messages and started actively updating him on the status of all the projects I was responsible for, allowing him to understand my work and to supervise and assist me. We discussed our work together and partnered in fellowship during gatherings. We complemented each other and upheld the church's work as a team. Thank God!

97. Why Do I Fear Shouldering Responsibility?

By Abby, Japan

I used to be in charge of the watering work in our church. One day, our leader came up to me and said that he was preparing to put me in charge of the film production work. I was stunned: I'd been responsible for the film production work a year before, but my eagerness for quick success had caused hindrances, and eventually I'd been dismissed. If they put me in charge of this work now, would I really be able to handle it? Being in charge of the film production work took more than just being capable of doing the work—it required knowledge of all sorts of related matters. I had too many gaps in my expertise; my abilities and my caliber were average. If I went and did this work, and I failed to get results, then what would I do? I knew I couldn't accept this duty. I told the leader about how I'd been dismissed from this duty before, and why it had happened, and emphasized that my caliber and work capability weren't that good. I implied that I didn't want to accept the duty. I thought that by hearing me say this, he would consider someone else for the position. But the leader did something I didn't expect: He fellowshiped with me, asking me to review the lessons I'd learned from my previous failure, and told me to do this duty well by relying on God. I was conflicted. I knew that I had God's permission to take on this duty; that I should accept it and submit. But I was afraid that if I accepted it and didn't do a good job, I'd be revealed and dismissed. After giving it some thought, I decided to bite the bullet and accept the duty. But the thought of being in charge of the film production work made me afraid. The sister who'd been in charge before me was no worse in ability and caliber than I was—if she couldn't do it well, then how could I? I thought about the watering work that I was doing at the time: It wasn't too difficult,

and the results I'd been getting weren't too bad. It would've been much less risky to keep doing that duty. Doing the film production work was much different: It was really difficult for me, and I'd already committed some transgressions when I did it before. If I couldn't do it well this time, and caused any disruptions or disturbances, I feared I might be eliminated. I was caught between a rock and a hard place. The more I thought about it, the more repressed I felt. Although I'd agreed to do it, I kept delaying it on the grounds that the watering work had not yet been handed over to someone else. I knew that this state wasn't right, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me toward an understanding of myself, and to help me turn this state around.

After praying, I read some of God's words: **"When Noah did as God instructed, he did not know what God's intentions were. He did not know what God wanted to accomplish. God had only given him a command and instructed him to do something, and without much explanation, Noah went ahead and did it. He did not try to secretly figure out God's desires, nor did he resist God or show insincerity. He just went and did it accordingly with a pure and simple heart. Whatever God had him do, he did, and submitting and listening to God's word underpinned his belief in what he did. That was how straightforwardly and simply he dealt with what God entrusted. His essence—the essence of his actions was submission, not second-guessing, not resisting, and moreover, not thinking of his own personal interests or his gains and losses. Further, when God said He would destroy the world with a flood, Noah did not ask when or ask what would become of things, and he certainly did not ask God how He was going to destroy the world. He simply did as God instructed. However God wanted it to be made and made with what, he did exactly as God**

asked and also commenced action immediately. He acted according to God's instructions with an attitude of wanting to satisfy God. ... He simply submitted, listened, and acted accordingly" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). I was touched by Noah's attitude toward God's commission. When Noah was entrusted with the commission by God, he did not know what God's intention was. But he didn't doubt, reject, or speculate upon God's request, and he didn't make excuses to not do it. He showed only simple obedience and submission, and did as God instructed. He didn't stop to think about his own personal gains or losses, but tried his best to satisfy God's request and completed God's commission. When I thought of my own attitude toward my duty, I felt so ashamed. When the leader told me about his plans to put me in charge of the film production work, I'd begun speculating and growing cautious in my heart. I'd thought that the film production work was too difficult, and that even a little carelessness would result in me being revealed, so I wanted to shirk my duty. When I did this duty before, I hadn't done it well—this was all the more reason why I should've accepted it this time with a grateful heart, been considerate of God's intentions in the course of performing it, and made up for my past indebtedness. But I'd only thought about my own interests. I'd suspected God and guarded against Him, feeling as though God had wanted to deprive me of my future prospects and destiny by giving me this duty. I saw that I had no conscience or reason. When things were normal, and there were no problems in my life, I'd shouted my willingness to submit to God and to satisfy Him. But as soon as He wanted me to take responsibility, I'd begun thinking about myself, showing not a hint of submission. The more I thought about it, the more ashamed I felt, and I resolved not to avoid my duty any longer. Still, my heart was burdened with concerns that had not yet completely dispelled, so

I continued praying to God, seeking answers that might help me to resolve this problem.

One day, during devotionals, I came across a passage of God's words that gave me an understanding of my state. Almighty God says: **"Some people are afraid of shouldering responsibility while performing their duty. If the church gives them a job to do, they will first consider whether the job requires them to shoulder responsibility, and if it does, they will not accept the job. Their conditions for performing a duty are, first, that it must be a slack job; second, that it is not busy or tiring; and third, that no matter what they do, they do not shoulder any responsibility. This is the only kind of duty they take on. What sort of a person is this? Is this not a slippery, deceitful person? They do not want to shoulder even the smallest amount of responsibility. They even fear that leaves will break their skull when they fall from trees. What duty can a person like this perform? What use could they have in the house of God? The work of the house of God has to do with the work of battling Satan, as well as spreading the kingdom gospel. What duty does not entail responsibilities? Would you say that being a leader carries responsibility? Are their responsibilities not all the greater, and must they not bear responsibility all the more? Regardless of whether you spread the gospel, testify, make videos, and so on—no matter what work you do—so long as it pertains to the truth principles, it carries with it responsibilities. If the performance of your duty is unprincipled, it will affect the work of God's house, and if you are afraid of shouldering responsibility, then you cannot perform any duty. Is someone who fears taking on responsibility in performing their duty cowardly, or is there a problem with their disposition? You must be able to tell the difference. The fact is that this is not an issue of**

cowardice. If that person were after wealth, or they were doing something in their own interest, how could they be so brave? They would take on any risk. But when they do things for the church, for God's house, they take on no risk at all. Such people are selfish and vile, the most treacherous of all. Anyone who does not take on responsibility in performing a duty is not the least bit sincere to God, to say nothing of their loyalty. What sort of person dares to take on responsibility? What sort of person has the courage to bear a heavy burden? Someone who takes the lead and goes bravely forth at the most crucial moment in the work of God's house, who is not afraid to bear a heavy responsibility and endure great hardship when they see the work that is most important and crucial. That is someone loyal to God, a good soldier of Christ. Is it the case that everyone who fears taking on responsibility in their duty does so because they do not understand the truth? No; it is a problem in their humanity. They have no sense of justice or responsibility, they are selfish and vile people, not true-hearted believers in God, and they do not accept the truth in the least. For this reason, they cannot be saved" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). My heart was greatly stirred by God's words. Before, I didn't think that my unwillingness to accept responsibility was such a serious problem. But now, through the exposure of God's words, I understood that people who are afraid to take responsibility are the most selfish and cunning sort of people. Such people have no sincerity toward God, and if they live in this state for too long and do not change, they will be despised by God in the end. Looking at my own performance through the lens of God's words, I saw that I was just such a person: selfish, despicable, slippery and deceitful. I was fully aware that the person in charge of the film production work had

just been transferred, and that there was an urgent need for someone else to come in and take on the role. I was familiar with the work and the personnel, and was the most suitable candidate for the role at this time. But because of my desire to protect myself, I was unwilling to take on this duty. I suggested that my caliber was poor and my work capabilities were lacking, but in reality I just wanted to shirk my duty. At the crucial moment, I acted like a deserter and didn't protect the church's work at all. I was selfish and despicable, and I had no humanity. When a person with truly good humanity sees the difficult situation in church work, they will actively stand up and rush to help maintain the work. They won't think about their own personal gains and losses. Even if they have their own difficulties or deficiencies, they won't shy away from their duty. They will rely on God to learn what to do and practice through experience, and try their best to improve. Only that kind of person possesses both conscience and reason. When I thought of all this, I felt sorrow and self-reproach. I reflected, and asked myself: What is preventing me from accepting this duty?

Later, I read some more of God's words: **"When their duties are adjusted, if the decision was made by the church, people should accept and obey, they must reflect on themselves, and understand the essence of the problem and their own shortcomings. This is very beneficial for people, and it is something that ought to be practiced. With something so simple, ordinary people can figure it out and treat it correctly, without encountering too many difficulties or any insurmountable hurdles. ... When a simple adjustment is made to their duty, people should answer with an attitude of obedience, do as God's house tells them to, and do what they are able, and, no matter what they do, do it as well as is within their power, with all their heart and all their strength. What God has done is not in error. Such a simple truth can be**

practiced by people with a little conscience and reason, but this is beyond the abilities of antichrists. When it comes to the adjustment of duties, antichrists will immediately offer arguments, sophistry, and defiance, and deep down they refuse to accept it. Just what is in their heart? Suspicion and doubt, they then probe others using all kinds of methods. They test the waters with their words and their actions, and even coerce and entice people to tell the truth and speak honestly through unscrupulous means. ... Why would they make a simple thing so complicated? There is only one reason: Antichrists never obey the arrangements of God's house, and they always closely link their duty, fame, gain, and status with their hope of gaining blessings and their future destination, as if once their reputation and status are lost, they have no hope of gaining blessings and rewards, and this feels like losing their lives to them. ... Therefore, they guard themselves against the leaders and workers of God's house, fearing that somebody will discern or see through them, and that they'll then be dismissed and their dream of blessings will be spoiled. They think they must maintain their reputation and status in order for them to have hope of gaining blessings. An antichrist sees being blessed as greater than the heavens, greater than life, more important than pursuing the truth, dispositional change, or personal salvation, and more important than doing their duty well, and being a created being that is up to standard. They think that being a created being that is up to standard, doing their duty well and being saved are all paltry things that are hardly worth mentioning or remarking on, while gaining blessings is the only thing in their entire life that can never be forgotten. In whatever they encounter, no matter how great or small, they relate it to being blessed, and are incredibly cautious and attentive, and they always leave a way out for themselves"

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status or No Hope of Gaining Blessings). God's words expose that antichrists are particularly wicked and deceitful. They will take a simple, straightforward matter and make it overly complicated. An antichrist would take the matter of reassignment in duty and link it to their blessings and destination. Antichrists do their duty only for the sake of their own blessings, viewing these as being more important than anything else. They are always planning their own outcome and destination, showing no consideration for God's intentions nor for the work of the church. What I had revealed, through my own behavior, was the disposition of an antichrist. Faced with a normal change to my duty, I'd thought about it over and over in my mind: how there were so few difficulties in the watering work I was currently doing, how smoothly the work went, how few mistakes I made, and how little chance there was of being revealed. Doing this duty was safer, and guaranteed I would receive blessings. The film production work, by contrast, was much harder, and required a solid grasp of a number of professional skills and principles. If I failed to do well, I'd be revealed and dismissed. Not only that, but I'd already failed before—I was afraid that if I caused any problems this time and was eliminated, I would have no hope whatsoever of receiving blessings. I saw that I'd been doing my duty on the premise of gaining blessings for myself; that I was willing to cooperate when it was beneficial to me, but resisted and refused to accept it when it was not. I was leaving a way out for myself, carefully protecting myself, trying to use my duty to achieve my goal of gaining blessings. I was being so deceitful and wicked! I thought of God's words: **“For a created being to be able to fulfill the duty of a created being, to be able to satisfy the Creator, is the most beautiful thing among humankind, and is something that should be spread as a tale to be praised by all people.**

Anything the Creator entrusts to created beings should be unconditionally accepted by them; for humankind, this is a matter of both happiness and privilege, and for all those who fulfill the duty of a created being, nothing is more beautiful or worthy of commemoration—it is something positive. ... Such a beautiful and such a great thing is twisted by the ilk of the antichrists into a transaction, in which they solicit crowns and rewards from God’s hand. Such a transaction turns something most beautiful and just into something most ugly and wicked. Is this not what the antichrists do? Judging from this, are the antichrists not wicked? They are quite wicked indeed!” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). It is the most beautiful and just thing for created beings to perform their duties. But antichrists twist this beautiful thing into a deal: They believe in God without sincerity, and perform their duties to gain blessings for themselves. Their essence is that of a disbeliever. I thought of how long I’d been believing in God, and how much I’d eaten and drunk the word of God, and yet my view on pursuit hadn’t changed at all. My attitude toward my duty was that of an antichrist. If I didn’t change, I’d be despised by God.

I continued reflecting on this, in order to understand myself, and found a passage of God’s words: “**Antichrists do not believe that the words of God are the truth, and they do not believe that His disposition is righteous and holy. They regard all this through human notions and imaginings, and they approach the work of God with human perspectives, human thoughts, and human guile, employing the logic and thinking of Satan to delineate God’s disposition, identity, and essence. Obviously, not only do antichrists neither accept nor acknowledge God’s disposition, identity, and essence; on the contrary they are full of notions, opposition, and rebelliousness toward God and**

have not the least shred of real knowledge of Him. Antichrists' definition of God's work, God's disposition, and God's love is a question mark—dubiousness, and they are full of skepticism and full of denial and slander for it; so what, then, of His identity? God's disposition represents His identity; with such a regard of God's disposition as theirs, their regard of God's identity is self-evident—direct denial. This is the essence of antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing

Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part Six)). God exposes that antichrists do not believe in God's righteousness. They do not believe that God's house is governed by the truth, and they even refuse to admit that the word of God is the truth. Antichrists always view God's actions based on their own notions and imaginings. They are full of doubts and denials of God's righteousness, and they do not believe that God is fair and righteous—this is defamation and blasphemy against God. When I'd finished reading God's words, I felt afraid. I thought about how I'd behaved just like an antichrist: I hadn't based my view of things on God's word, and I hadn't believed in God's righteousness. Instead, I'd fallaciously believed that the greater the responsibility I took, and the greater the difficulty of the work, the sooner I'd be revealed. I'd thought that once I failed to do my work well or any deviations arose, I'd be dismissed and eliminated, and so I always wanted to hide from that responsibility. I didn't want my work to be difficult or important, thinking that this way I wouldn't be revealed so quickly. Now, from God's words, I understood that God is righteous, and that the church reassigns people's duties based on principles. The church doesn't just willfully dismiss people over temporary mistakes and transgressions—it looks at people's consistent performance and makes a comprehensive decision. If a person is of a good humanity and pursues the truth, then even

if some deviations appear in their work or they temporarily fail to achieve good results, the church will help and support them. Likewise, if someone cannot do real work because they are lacking in caliber, the church will look at their situation and assign them an appropriate duty. And if a person consistently fails to do real work, or disturbs and disrupts the work of the church, and if they consistently fail to repent after receiving repeated assistance and fellowship, then in the end they will be dismissed. I thought back to the last time I was in charge of the film production work, and how my desire for quick success had caused hindrances. At the time, others had fellowshiped with me and tried to help me, but I didn't change my ways, and in the end, I was dismissed. However, the church still gave me another chance to repent, allowing me to keep doing a duty. I also saw how some of the brothers and sisters around me often had problems and difficulties in their work—but they were simple, and honest, and they pursued the truth. Even though they would have problems and make errors, they were able to gradually grasp the principles and do their duties better and better, through continuous review and reflection. From this, I could see that God is righteous, and that God's house is governed by the truth. Those who pursue the truth and make a sincere effort may commit transgressions sometimes. But as long as they are willing to repent, God's house will give them as many chances as possible. And, if they are able to change, then God's house will continue to promote them and cultivate them. But those who do not accept the truth, hate the truth and commit all kinds of evil without repenting—those people will be cleared out of God's house. The church put me in charge of the film production work, and in doing so gave me a chance to practice and make up for my shortcomings. Not only was I ungrateful for this, but I also misunderstood and guarded myself against this decision, thinking that God's house was just as unfair and unrighteous as society.

Wasn't this a kind of blasphemy against God? When I realized this, I began to shed tears. I hated myself for my rebelliousness, and for my lack of conscience and reason! I felt remorse and self-blame, and came before God to pray and repent. In the future, I would no longer misunderstand and guard against God.

Afterward, I read two passages of God's words. Almighty God says: **"There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he receives blessings or suffers misfortune. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. Receiving blessings refers to when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. Suffering misfortune refers to when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment; they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they receive blessings or suffer misfortune, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to receive blessings, and you should not refuse to act for fear of suffering misfortune. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). **"What are the manifestations of an honest person? Firstly, having no doubts about God's words. That is one of the manifestations of an honest person. Apart from this, the most important manifestation is seeking and practicing the truth in all matters—this is most crucial. You say that you are honest, but you**

always push God's words to the back of your mind and just do whatever you want. Is that the manifestation of an honest person? You say, 'Although my caliber is poor, I have an honest heart.' And yet when a duty falls to you, you are afraid of suffering and bearing responsibility if you do not do it well, so you make excuses to shirk your duty or suggest that someone else do it. Is this the manifestation of an honest person? Clearly, it is not. How, then, should an honest person behave? They should submit to God's arrangements, be loyal to the duty they are supposed to perform, and strive to satisfy God's intentions. This manifests itself in several ways: One is accepting your duty with an honest heart, not considering your fleshly interests, not being half-hearted about it, and not plotting for your own benefit. Those are manifestations of honesty. Another is putting all your heart and strength into performing your duty well, doing things properly, and putting your heart and love into your duty to satisfy God. These are the manifestations an honest person should have while performing their duty" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words gave me a path of practice. A duty is a person's heaven-sent vocation, a responsibility that they should fulfill. It has nothing to do with receiving blessings or encountering misfortune. Whether it was good or bad for me personally, I had to accept this duty with an honest heart and do it as best I could, without planning or scheming for my own benefit. No matter what difficulties I faced in my duty, as long as I sincerely relied on God, then He would guide me. I was willing to do my best to cooperate with an open heart. If my caliber really was lacking, or if my abilities weren't enough and I wasn't up to the task, then I would accept the church's reassignment.

After this, I began to take charge of the film production work. During the course of my work, I sometimes encountered difficulties or failures, but I was no longer filled with misgivings over this. Through collaboration in heart and mind with my brothers and sisters, and by seeking the truth principles together, we were able to gradually resolve these difficulties. I learned from my failures, and before long the work had improved. Seeing all this, I was touched. That I was able to experience such a change was entirely the result of God's words. Thank God!

98. What Comes of Always Pleasing Others

By Vicky, USA

I supervise gospel work in the church. Sister Wanda and I act together as team leaders. In the beginning, I could see Wanda was proactive in her duty, and that she was quite effective in her work. I thought she was a responsible person who bore burdens. But after a while, I noticed she was increasingly passive in her duty. She rarely noticed problems in the work, let alone resolved them. In the past when we were summarizing our work, she'd always come to me to summarize problems or deviations in the work, and to discuss ways to solve them. But this time there was just silence. Usually, we shared the bulk of the work in our team, and problems were summarized in a timely manner whenever discovered. This could solve problems better and improve work effectiveness. But now, Wanda wasn't putting her heart into the group's problems. I thought, "She isn't fulfilling her responsibilities as a team leader. This isn't acceptable, I have to fellowship with her about it." But on second thought, "My relationship with Wanda is usually pretty good. If I tell her straight out that she is bearing a light burden in her duty and not doing any real work, will it embarrass her? If I disturb the peace by saying this, how will we get along afterward? Forget it. The less trouble, the better. I shouldn't offend her." At that time, I constantly felt accused in my mind, "Hasn't Wanda's state been bad during this period of time? If this goes on, her life will suffer and it will impact her work. Shouldn't I hurry up and fellowship with her? But if I just directly point out that she lacks a sense of burden, will she feel constrained and think I'm monitoring her work? Maybe I should just tell the leader and let her help Wanda. Then I won't need to offend her." But then I thought, "If I tell the leader and Wanda finds out, will she say I was tattling on her? No,

it's better not to say anything." I went back and forth like this and I just couldn't get any reprieve from the matter. I was aware that my state was wrong, and so I prayed to God, asking Him to lead me to seek the truth and fix my problems.

Once during a gathering, I read God's words: **"When you see a problem yet do nothing to stop it, do not fellowship about it, do not try to limit it, and moreover you do not report it to those above you, but play the part of people pleaser, is this a sign of disloyalty? Are people pleasers loyal to God? Not even a little. Such a person is not just disloyal to God—they are acting as Satan's accomplice, its attendant and follower. They are disloyal in their duty and responsibility, but to Satan, they are quite loyal. Herein lies the essence of the problem. As to professional inadequacy, it is possible to constantly learn and draw together your experiences while performing your duty. Such problems can be easily resolved. The most difficult thing to resolve is man's corrupt disposition. If you do not pursue the truth or resolve your corrupt disposition, but are always playing the people pleaser, and not pruning or helping those whom you have seen violate the principles, nor exposing or revealing them, but always shrinking back, not taking responsibility, then such performance of duty as yours will only compromise and delay the work of the church"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). **"People's conduct and ways of dealing with the world must be based on the words of God; this is the most basic principle for human conduct. How can people practice the truth if they do not understand the principles of human conduct? Practicing the truth is not about saying empty words or shouting slogans. Rather it is about how, no matter what people encounter in life, as long as it involves the**

principles of human conduct, their perspectives on things, or the matter of performing their duties, they are faced with making a choice, and they should seek the truth, search for a basis and principles in God's words, and then find a path of practice. Those who can practice in this way are people who pursue the truth. To be able to pursue the truth in this way no matter how great the difficulties one encounters is to walk the path of Peter, the path of pursuing the truth. For example: What principle should be followed when it comes to interacting with others? Perhaps your original viewpoint is that 'Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance,' and that you should keep on everyone's good side, avoid causing others to lose face, and offend no one, thereby achieving good relations with others. Constricted by this viewpoint, you keep silent when you witness others doing bad things or violating the principles. You would rather that the work of the church suffers losses than offend anyone. You seek to stay on everyone's good side, no matter who they are. You think only about human sentiments and saving face when you speak, and you always speak nice-sounding words to please others. Even if you discover that someone has problems, you choose to tolerate them, and just talk about them behind their back, but to their face you keep the peace and maintain your relationship. What do you think of such conduct? Is it not that of a people pleaser? Is it not pretty slippery? It violates the principles of human conduct. Is it not lowly to conduct yourself in such a manner? Those who act like this are not good people, this is not a noble way to conduct oneself. No matter how much you have suffered, and no matter how many prices you have paid, if you conduct yourself without principles, then you have failed in this respect, and your conduct will not be recognized, remembered, or accepted before God'' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To

Perform One's Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). God's words made me recognize that I had been harboring the fallacious view that relationships between people always needed to be peaceful. If I always pointed out and exposed others' issues, it would offend them and likely hurt both their pride and our relationship, making it harder to get along. By comparing this view with God's words, I finally saw that it wasn't in line with the truth, and went against the principles of being a person. People like this are selfish, despicable, slippery, and deceitful. To maintain good relations, they say nothing when they see someone has a problem, and only offer words of flattery and praise. They are insincere in their interactions and do not truly help, but rather, they bring harm upon people. These people are lowlives in God's eyes, and He does not approve of them. Just like how I treated Wanda—I saw clearly that she bore no burden in her duty and was not doing real work, but I didn't practice the truth by calling her out on her problems. I didn't even have the courage to report her issues. All I considered was how to preserve my relationship with her. I thought that exposing someone's issues would offend them and hurt their feelings. Even though I saw that it was impacting work, I still wasn't willing to rebel against the flesh and practice the truth. I was being a deceitful person, a people pleaser. I discovered my sister's problem but did not expose it. Although I preserved our relationship, it was of no benefit whatsoever to her life entry, and it affected the church's gospel work, too. By doing this, I was truly harming others and the church's work.

After this, I pondered what the principles for interacting with people should be. I saw that God's word says: **"You must focus on the truth—only then can you have life entry, and only when you have life entry can you provide for others and lead them. If it is discovered that others' actions are at odds with the truth, we must lovingly help them to strive**

for the truth. If others are able to practice the truth, and there are principles to the way they do things, we should try to learn from and emulate them. This is what mutual love is. This is the sort of atmosphere you must have within the church—everyone focusing on the truth and striving to attain it. It does not matter how old or young people are, or whether or not they are veteran believers. Nor does it matter whether they have high or low caliber. These things do not matter. Before the truth, everyone is equal. The things you must look at are who speaks correctly and in conformity with the truth, who thinks of the interests of God’s house, who bears the greatest burden in the work of God’s house, who understands the truth more clearly, who shares a sense of justice, and who is willing to pay the price. Such people should be supported and applauded by their brothers and sisters. This atmosphere of uprightness that comes from pursuing the truth must prevail within the church; in this way, you will have the work of the Holy Spirit, and God will bestow blessings and guidance. If the atmosphere that prevails within the church is one of telling tales, making a fuss about one another, bearing grudges against each other, being jealous of each other, and arguing with each other, then the Holy Spirit will certainly not work in you” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only One Who Performs Their Duty Well With All Their Heart, Mind, and Soul Is One Who Loves God). In the church the truth reigns; brothers and sisters should interact according to the truth principles. Church members should put the truth as their priority when interacting. Anyone who violates principles should be told, pruned and helped lovingly so that they can strive toward the truth. Whoever speaks and acts in accordance with the truth, has a sense of justice and is able to protect the church’s work should be supported and protected. When everyone strives to do their duties according to God’s

requirements, fellowships and practices the truth, God's chosen people's deviations in carrying out their duties will decrease over time. When I understood these things, my heart lifted, and I had a path to practice. Then I thought about how actually, every true believer in God wants to do their duty well and repay His love. But no one can avoid revealing their corruption and many insufficiencies in the course of their duty. Brothers and sisters must help and correct each other on this. Pointing out and exposing others' problems isn't done to embarrass them, or to attack them, rather, it is done to help them realize their problems and reverse their incorrect state as early as possible. Only this is true love, and the expression of mutual love. It is to protect the work of the church. By contrast, when you see others' problems but keep your lips sealed, carrying out Satan's philosophy to protect your personal interests, this is being irresponsible toward their life entry and the church's work. Living this way is too selfish and despicable. I thought about my interactions with Wanda. I saw there were problems in her duty, but didn't give her any real help because I was only concerned with protecting my image, and gave no thought to her life entry, nor the church's work. I was truly selfish, base, and had no humanity! At this point I was filled with reproach, and willing to practice God's words, and treat my sister in accordance with the truth principles.

Later, I went to Wanda and opened up and fellowshiped with her. I told her all the problems I'd seen one-by-one. She was really moved after reading a passage of God's words, and said her state had been really bad lately and that she even had nothing to say during prayers. I was shocked to hear this and blamed myself. If I had pointed this out and helped her earlier, maybe she could have reversed her incorrect state sooner, and it wouldn't have impacted her duty. I saw how my not practicing the truth and acting as a people pleaser just to preserve my relationship with my sister was really

harming her. So I prayed to God and resolved that in my future interactions with people, I would focus on practicing the truth, and that if I discovered a problem I would point it out and help right away rather than be a people pleaser.

From then on, Wanda was more active in her duty. But after a while, I noticed that her work frequently violated principles. Even if someone was of bad humanity and wasn't in line with the principles of receiving the gospel, she would still preach the gospel to them, wasting effort. I was confused. Wanda had been preaching the gospel for so long. She should have a better grasp on every aspect of the principles. How could she make such obvious mistakes? Has her state not been reversed yet? Maybe I should remind her. But then I thought, "I already helped her before. I don't need to constantly correct her. This is so uncomfortable. If I'm always correcting her, will she think I'm an arrogant person, that I'm always nitpicking others' problems, or that I ask too much of people? That would be bad for my image. I should just leave it alone." So just like that, I saw that Wanda's state and condition weren't right during her duty, but I still turned a blind eye and didn't point it out or help her. Some time passed, and Wanda was dismissed because she had been perfunctory and ineffective in her duties for a long time. I felt so guilty. I clearly saw there were problems in how she did her duty, but I paid no heed. I turned a blind eye, and did nothing to remind or help her. Now that she had been dismissed, was I not also responsible? I felt tormented and at a loss. Why was I always a people pleaser and incapable of practicing the truth? What was the root of this problem?

As I reflected and sought, I saw that God's word says: **"There is a tenet in philosophies for worldly dealings that says, 'Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship.' It**

means that in order to preserve a friendly relationship, one must keep silent about their friend's problems, even if they see them clearly—that they should abide by the principles of not striking people in the face or calling out their shortcomings. They are to deceive each other, hide from each other, engage in intrigue with each other; and though they know with crystal clarity what sort of person the other is, they do not say it outright, but employ cunning methods to preserve their friendly relationship. Why would one want to preserve such relationships? It is about not wanting to make enemies in this society, within one's group, which would mean subjecting oneself often to dangerous situations. Knowing someone will become your enemy and harm you after you have called out their shortcomings or hurt them, and not wishing to put yourself in such a situation, you employ the tenet of philosophies for worldly dealings that runs, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call out their shortcomings.' In light of this, if two people are in such a relationship, do they count as true friends? (No.) They are not true friends, much less each other's confidant. So, what sort of relationship is this, exactly? Is it not a fundamental social relationship? (It is.) In such social relationships, people cannot offer their feelings, nor have deep exchanges, nor speak about whatever they wish. They cannot say out loud what is in their heart, or the problems they see in the other, or words that would benefit the other. Instead, they pick nice things to say, to keep the other's favor. They dare not speak the truth or uphold the principles, lest it give rise to animosity toward them in others. When no one is threatening to someone, does that person not live in relative ease and peace? Is this not people's goal in promoting the saying, 'If you strike others, don't strike them in the face; if you call others out, don't call

out their shortcomings’? (It is.) Clearly, this is a cunning, deceptive way of existence with an element of defensiveness, whose goal is self-preservation. People who live like this have no confidants, no close friends with whom they can say whatever they like. They are defensive with each other, and calculating, and strategic, each taking what they need from the relationship. Is this not so? At its root, the goal of ‘If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings’ is to keep from offending others and making enemies, to protect oneself by not causing hurt to anyone. It is a technique and method one adopts to keep themselves from being hurt”

(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). **“Man’s satanic nature contains a great deal of satanic philosophies and poisons. Sometimes you yourself are not even aware of them, and do not understand them; nevertheless, every moment of your life is based on these things. Moreover, you think that these things are quite correct and reasonable, and not at all mistaken. This suffices to show that Satan’s philosophies have become people’s nature, and that they are living in complete accordance with them, thinking this way of living to be good, and without any sense of repentance at all. Therefore, they are constantly revealing their satanic nature, and they are constantly living by Satan’s philosophies. Satan’s nature is humanity’s life, and it is humanity’s nature essence”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

How to Walk the Path of Peter). Through the exposure of God’s word, I understood that the reason I couldn’t help myself from being a people pleaser was because I had been too deeply corrupted by Satan. My heart was full of Satan’s philosophies and laws, like “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings,” and “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good

friendship,” etc. These things had become the code by which I acted and conducted myself. Under the command of these satanic philosophies, I thought that not offending people with my words and actions, maintaining good relationships, and keeping the peace was a wise way to conduct myself. So, even though I saw Wanda was perfunctory in her duty and violated principles, and that it had already impacted work, I was unwilling to expose or correct her. I preferred to let gospel work suffer to maintain my relationships. I was so tightly bound by Satan’s philosophies that I couldn’t practice the truth and didn’t have an ounce of conscience or reason! I saw that God’s word says: **“Clearly, this is a cunning, deceptive way of existence with an element of defensiveness, whose goal is self-preservation”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (8)). I was deeply stirred. God’s words hit the nail on the head, and exposed my base intentions when I lived by the satanic philosophies. Before, I’d pompously thought that the reason I didn’t correct my sister was because I was afraid she’d feel constrained. But actually, this was just an excuse for me to not practice the truth. I was afraid that if I corrected her too often, she’d be offended, and think I was an arrogant person who likes to nitpick and who can’t treat people fairly. To give my sister a good impression, I turned a blind eye to her problems, and didn’t fellowship the truth or expose her to help her. Actually, thinking about it, pointing out and exposing the issues of brothers and sisters when I notice them is to help them. This is having a sense of justice and responsibility for their life and the church’s work and it’s not revealing an arrogant disposition, nor is it trying to give them a hard time. But I distortedly thought that pointing out and exposing others’ problems was a sign of arrogance, and treated this positive practice as a revelation of corruption. I really did not know right from wrong and was so absurd! Only then did I realize that I was not

sincere in my interactions with others, it was all fake appearances and tricks. I had been so slippery and deceitful! I thought about how when I partnered with Wanda in our duties, I didn't practice the truth I should have practiced, and didn't fulfill the responsibility I was supposed to. Now she had been dismissed, and I was left with regret. I had experienced how living according to Satan's philosophies truly hurt others and myself and how it made my life base and sordid. I didn't want to live according to them anymore. I wanted to seek the truth and do my duty well.

Later on, I saw that God's word says: **"Be an honest person, or to go into a bit more detail: Be a simple and open person, who does not cover anything up, who does not lie, who does not mince words, and be a direct person who has a sense of justice, who can speak truthfully. People must achieve this first. ... God detests deceitful people above all. If you want to be free of Satan's influence and achieve salvation, then you must accept the truth. You must first start by becoming an honest person. Be frank, tell the truth, do not be constrained by your feelings, cast off your pretense and trickery, and speak and handle matters with principles—this is an easy and happy way to live, and you will be able to live before God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Cast Off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). **"My kingdom requires those who are honest, those who are not hypocritical or deceitful. Are not the sincere and honest people unpopular in the world? I am just the opposite. It is acceptable for the honest people to come to Me; I delight in this kind of person, and I also need this kind of person. This is precisely My righteousness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 33). God's words made me understand that God likes honest people who are pure and upright, people who can be straight-forward and not deceitful in their speech and actions.

Only honest people are worthy of entering God's kingdom. This has been decided by God's righteous disposition. Thinking about how in the world of unbelievers, every interaction is performative. Only pleasant and flattering words are spoken in front of others, with not a single word of honesty. In the face of evil things which go against conscience and ethics, most people choose to protect themselves, and think it best to avoid stirring the pot. They don't dare speak even a word of honesty or fairness. They are especially hypocritical and treacherous, and have no integrity or backbone. But when I interacted with brothers and sisters, I too was carrying out these satanic philosophies. When I saw a problem, I didn't expose it or help. I just protected my relationships with others. Living this way is too slippery and deceitful. It disgusts God and He hates it. At this point, I thought of how God is holy and has a faithful essence. God incarnate is interacting with people in a real way. He is expressing the truth, passing judgment, and exposing people everywhere all the time, in accordance with the corrupt disposition they reveal, and their notions of God. In particular, God's words of judgment and exposure speak directly to the root and essence of our corruption. Although His words are severe and harsh, they are all to make us know ourselves, repent and change. God's words are stalwart and unequivocal. They are all words from the heart. God has a particularly honest and reliable heart toward people. If God didn't clearly point and spell it out for us, if He didn't expose the truth of how deeply humans have been corrupted by Satan, we would never know ourselves. Instead, we would be living in our own imaginings, thinking we are good. Our corrupt disposition would never change, and we would never achieve salvation. God hopes we can recognize the truth of our corruption through His words of judgment and exposure, and that we can repent to God, live by His words, and seek to be an honest person. This is God's love toward people.

After pondering all this, I felt a great sense of encouragement. I resolved that I was willing to follow God's demands, and be a pure, upright, and honest person.

Once, our leader, Sister Belinda, was discussing work with us. I realized there was a deviation in the work she assigned, and wanted to point it out to her. But then I thought, "This sister is the leader. If I point out an oversight or deviation in her duty, will she be embarrassed? If she thinks I'm trying to make things difficult for her and she tries to get back at me later, then what? Forget it, I shouldn't say anything. Everyone makes mistakes." At this point, I realized that my people-pleaser view was coming to the fore again. So I prayed that God would guide me to practice according to the truth principles. Afterward, I read God's word that says: **"If you have the motivations and perspective of a people pleaser, then, in all matters, you will be incapable of practicing the truth and abiding by principle, and you will always fail and fall down. If you do not awaken and do not ever seek the truth, then you are a disbeliever, and you will never gain the truth and life. What, then, should you do? When faced with such things, you must pray to God and call out to Him, begging for salvation and asking that He give you more faith and strength and enable you to abide by the principles, do what you should do, handle things according to the principles, stand firm in the position you should stand in, protect the interests of God's house, and prevent any harm from coming to the work of God's house. If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth. If you always persist in living by the philosophy of Satan, protecting your relationships with others, never practicing the**

truth, and not daring to abide by the principles, then will you be able to practice the truth in other matters? You will still have no faith or strength. If you are never able to seek or accept the truth, then will such faith in God allow you to obtain the truth? (No.) And if you cannot obtain the truth, can you be saved? You cannot. If you always live by the philosophy of Satan, utterly devoid of the truth reality, then you can never be saved. It should be clear to you that obtaining the truth is a necessary condition for salvation. How, then, can you obtain the truth? If you are able to practice the truth, if you can live by the truth, and the truth becomes the basis of your life, then you will gain the truth and have life, and so you will be one of those who are saved”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading God’s words, I saw that if people live by satanic philosophies and are always people pleasers, they will never obtain the truth, and will ultimately never achieve salvation. At the same time, I understood that if we want to fix the problem of being a people pleaser, we need to pray a lot and rely on God, ask God for strength, be able to rebel against the flesh, forsake personal interests, and consider the church’s work. By practicing often in this way, we can gradually overcome the bondage of our corrupt disposition. If we are forever unable to practice the truth and are not devoted to our duty, eventually we will be revealed and eliminated. At this thought, I had the courage and motivation to practice the truth. I couldn’t continue to be a people pleaser with no conscience and humanity. So, I brought the issue up with Belinda. After telling her, I felt a sense of great relief. Later on, at a gathering, Belinda fellowshiped about her reflection and gains after being corrected. Hearing about her experiential understanding touched me a lot, and I tasted the sweetness of practicing the truth. Having this experience increased my faith in practicing the truth.

When I encountered similar situations after this, though I would still often reveal the views of a people pleaser, the pain and struggle I experienced were less than before. I could consciously rebel against myself and practice the truth. By practicing the truth this way, my heart felt greatly relieved and at peace. It was God's words that achieved this effect. Thank God!

99. Is Believing in God Just for Grace Right?

By Liu Lu, China

At the end of 2016, my child kept getting diarrhea, and no amount of medication helped. Unexpectedly, just a few days after I began believing in God, my child's illness was cured. After some time, without even noticing it, my chronic headache also improved. I was deeply grateful to God. After that, I made every effort to cooperate on any duty arranged by the church. At that time, my husband stood in the way of my faith in God, but I was not constrained, believing that so long as I sincerely believed in God and did my duties, I would receive God's blessings and have the chance to be saved.

In April 2020, I was chosen as a church leader, and I cooperated even more actively. One day, a few months later, after a meal, I felt really tired and dizzy, so I checked my blood pressure, and found that it was between 160 mmHg and 90 mmHg. I couldn't believe it, thinking, "I never had high blood pressure before, why is it suddenly so high?" Since I was still young, I thought that so long as I sincerely did my duties, God would protect me, and my blood pressure would surely go down, so I didn't feel very constrained, and only used some home remedies for treatment. In March 2021, I measured my blood pressure at a pharmacy, and it was between 185 mmHg and 128 mmHg. The doctor was very surprised, saying, "Your blood pressure is very high; be very careful not to fall when riding a bike." Hearing the doctor say this made me pretty anxious, and I thought, "High blood pressure can lead to lots of complications, some people have cerebral congestion due to high blood pressure and suddenly die, some get cerebral infarctions and end up walking with a limp, and others end up paralyzed, unable to take care of themselves, what if I fall and become paralyzed?" At this point, I began to complain, thinking, "I have always done my duties, so

why is my blood pressure still so high? Why hasn't God protected me?" One morning when I got up, I suddenly felt very dizzy, both shoulders hurt terribly, and it felt like there were several tendons being pulled in my head, and it was agonizing to move my head as if it were breaking off. I felt like I could die at any moment from a ruptured blood vessel. I went to the hospital for an examination, and the doctor said it was severe cervical spondylosis causing the headache. After treatment, the symptoms were somewhat relieved, but I still felt very dizzy and sometimes had headaches. I became somewhat negative, thinking, "Despite all my effort and expenditure, why is my condition not only not improving, but getting worse? If things carry on this way, I might die at any moment. Maybe it'd be better to do a single type of work. It'd be less tiring than being a leader, and perhaps my condition would improve." Although I continued to do my duties, I was living in a state of anxiety and distress, and I had no sense of burden for my duties. When I saw that the gospel work was ineffective, I had no desire to analyze the reasons or solve the problems.

Later, I used some home remedies and took antihypertensive medication, and my blood pressure went down a bit. However, I was still worried about my condition flaring up again, thinking that despite all my effort and expenditure, not only had I not received any blessings but that my health was worsening, so I no longer wanted to do my duty as a leader, thinking that doing a single type of work would be less burdensome and allow me to take better care of my health. During that period, because of my poor state, most of my fellowship in meetings was negative and passive, and I was not focused on my duties, which led to a continual decline in the effectiveness of the gospel work. It wasn't until the upper-level leaders pruned me for being too perfunctory in my duties, and warned that if I did not repent, I would be dismissed, that I realized I was disrupting and

disturbing the work, felt some fear, and finally came before God to pray and reflect on myself. One day, I heard a hymn of God's words **"You Must Seek God's Will When Sickness Strikes."** It says: **"How should you experience sickness when it comes? You should come before God and pray, seek and grope for God's intention; you should examine yourself to find what it is you have done that went against the truth, and what corruption in you has not been resolved. Your corrupt disposition cannot be resolved without undergoing suffering. Only in being tempered by suffering can people not be dissolute, and able to live before God at all times. When someone suffers, they are always at prayer. They will examine themselves to see whether they have done anything wrong or where they may have gone against the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Believing in God, Gaining the Truth Is Most Crucial). After hearing God's words, I understood that God was using this illness to make me reflect on myself and recognize my corrupt disposition, that it was for the purpose of saving me, and that it contained God's earnest intention. I had believed in God for several years, but when faced with illness, I did not know to seek God's intention in prayer, nor did I reflect on which aspects of my corrupt disposition God wanted to purify and change, or what impurities there were in my belief. Instead, I remained in a state of negativity and resistance due to the illness, and when there were many problems in the gospel work, I didn't think about resolving them but instead wanted to shirk my duties. My disposition had been so intransigent, and I had been truly lacking in conscience and reason! I then came before God in prayer, saying, "God, I don't want to continue being so intransigent, please lead me to learn a lesson from this illness."

Later, I sought solutions to my problems, and I watched an experiential testimony video, which included a passage of God's words that was very

relevant to my state. Almighty God says: “Many who follow God are only concerned with how to gain blessings or stave off disaster. As soon as God’s work and management are mentioned, they fall silent and lose all interest. They think that understanding such tedious issues will not help their lives to grow or provide any benefit. Consequently, although they have heard about God’s management, they approach it in an unserious manner. They do not see it as something precious to be accepted, much less do they accept it by taking it as part of their lives. Such people only have one simple aim in following God, and that aim is to receive blessings. Such people cannot be bothered to pay heed to anything else that does not directly involve this aim. To them, there is no goal more legitimate than believing in God to receive blessings—it is the very value of their faith. If something does not contribute to this aim, they remain completely unmoved by it. This is the case with most people who believe in God today. Their aim and intention seem legitimate, because as they believe in God, they also expend for God, dedicate themselves to God, and perform their duty. They give up their youth, forsake family and career, and even spend years away from home busying themselves. For the sake of their ultimate goal, they change their own interests, their outlook on life, and even the direction they seek; yet they cannot change the aim of their belief in God. They run about for the management of their own ideals; no matter how far the road is, and no matter how many hardships and obstacles there are along the way, they remain persistent and unafraid of death. What power compels them to continue dedicating themselves in this way? Is it their conscience? Is it their great and noble character? Is it their determination to battle the forces of evil to the very end? Is it their faith to bear witness to God without seeking reward? Is it their loyalty

in being willing to give up everything to fulfill God's will? Or is it their spirit of devotion to always forgo extravagant personal demands? For someone who has never understood the work of God's management to still give so much is, quite simply, a miracle! For the moment, let us not discuss how much these people have given. Their behavior, however, is highly worthy of our dissection. Apart from the benefits that are so closely associated with them, could there be any other reasons why people who never understand God would give so much for Him? In this, we discover a previously unidentified problem: Man's relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is the relationship between an employee and an employer. The employee works hard only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such an interests-based relationship, only transaction. There is no loving or being loved, only charity and mercy. There is no understanding, only helpless suppressed indignation and deception. There is no intimacy, only an uncrossable chasm" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God's Management). God exposes that though many people do their duties, make sacrifices, expend themselves, and busy themselves with work, outwardly appearing to submit to and satisfy God, in essence, they have their own intentions, and they try to use and barter with God to achieve their goal of gaining blessings. I reflected on how, ever since I accepted God's work in the last days, my child's illness had been cured, and my chronic headache had also been healed, and so I became active in my duties, and even when my family tried to stand in my way, I did not back down, believing that so long as I tried hard at my duties, I would receive God's grace and blessings in the future and ultimately be saved. Even after discovering I had high

blood pressure, I didn't abandon my duties, and was willing to burn the midnight oil, no matter how hard or tiring it might be, believing that if I was loyal in my duties, God might remove my illness. When my condition didn't improve and kept worsening, I misunderstood and complained, and I ignored the problems in the gospel work, even thinking of abandoning my duties as a leader. I saw that my years of sacrifice and expenditure had not been to fulfill the duty of a created being, but rather to try and use God to barter future blessings and a good destination and outcome. My relationship with God was merely that of an employee with their employer, purely transactional.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"No matter how they are tried, the allegiance of those who have God in their heart remains unchanged; but for those who do not have God in their heart, once the work of God is not advantageous to their flesh, they change their view of God, and even depart from God. Such are those who will not stand fast in the end, who only seek God's blessings and have no desire to expend themselves for God and dedicate themselves to Him. Such base people will all be expelled when God's work comes to an end, and they are unworthy of any sympathy. Those without humanity are incapable of truly loving God. When the environment is safe and secure, or there are profits to be made, they are totally obedient toward God, but once that which they desire is compromised or finally refuted, they immediately revolt. Even in the space of just one night, they may go from a smiling, 'kind-hearted' person to an ugly-looking and ferocious killer, suddenly treating their benefactor of yesterday as their mortal enemy, without rhyme or reason. If these demons are not cast out, these demons that would kill without blinking an eye, will they not become a hidden danger?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Work and

Man's Practice). From God's words, I saw that a person who has God in their heart knows that everything comes from God, and whether they receive blessings or suffer misfortune, they are able to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements. Just like Job during his trials, when his flocks and herds were taken away, his children died, and he was covered in sores, he did not complain about God or forsake Him, but instead praised God, "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21). Job had genuine faith in God and a God-fearing heart. I compared this with my own behavior. After accepting God's work, my child's illness had been healed, and my chronic headache was also cured. I received grace from God and became enthusiastic in my expenditure, but when my illness became more and more severe, and I didn't receive the blessings I wanted, I immediately turned against God and began to complain about Him, I no longer had a sense of burden for my duties and I didn't uphold the interests of the church at all. I only considered my personal interests, only wanting to receive blessings and gains from God, and when I did not get them, I became negative and negligent, and opposed God. I realized how selfish and despicable I had been, lacking in humanity and reason. If I continued to be so intransigent, I would ultimately be spurned and eliminated by God.

Later, I read more of God's words: **"Since being blessed is not an appropriate objective for people to pursue, what is an appropriate objective? The pursuit of the truth, the pursuit of changes in disposition, and being able to submit to all of God's orchestrations and arrangements: these are the objectives that people should pursue. Say, for example, being pruned causes you to have notions and misunderstandings, and you become incapable of submission. Why can't you submit? Because you feel that your destination or your**

dream of being blessed has been challenged. You become negative and upset, and try to get out of doing your duty. What is the reason for this? There is a problem with your pursuit. So how should this be solved? It is imperative that you immediately abandon these mistaken ideas, and that you immediately seek the truth to solve the problem of your corrupt disposition. You should say to yourself, 'I must not quit, I must still do well the duty that a created being ought to, and put aside my desire to be blessed.' When you relinquish the desire to be blessed and you walk the path of pursuing the truth, a weight is lifted off your shoulders. And will you still be capable of negativity? Even though there are still times when you are negative, you don't let this constrain you, and in your heart, you keep praying and fighting, changing the objective of your pursuit from the pursuit of being blessed and having a destination, to the pursuit of the truth, and you think to yourself, 'The pursuit of the truth is the duty of a created being. To understand certain truths today—there is no greater harvest, this is the greatest blessing of all. Even if God does not want me, and I do not have a good destination, and my hopes of being blessed are shattered, I shall still do my duty properly, I am obligated to. Whatever the reason, it will not impact my performance of my duty, it will not affect my accomplishment of God's commission; this is the principle by which I conduct myself.' And in this, have you not transcended the constraints of the flesh? Some may say, 'Well, what if I'm still negative?' Then seek the truth again to resolve it. However many times you fall into negativity, if you just keep on seeking the truth to resolve it, and keep on striving for the truth, you will slowly emerge from your negativity. And one day, you will feel that you do not have the desire to gain blessings and are not constrained by your destination and outcome, and

that you are easier and freer living without these things” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Practice of the Truth Is There Life Entry).

After reading God’s words, I understood that gaining blessings is not the goal we should pursue in our faith in God, nor is it the path we should walk in our faith in God. The path we should walk in our faith in God is one of pursuing the truth and achieving a transformation in disposition, being able to submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements and becoming a true created being. I had been doing my duties to receive God’s grace and blessings, but when my illness worsened and I felt my hopes for blessings were shattered, I became negative and resistant. Although outwardly I did not abandon my duties, my heart had already betrayed God. I was doing my duties perfunctorily, and not addressing problems, resulting in ineffective gospel work and brothers and sisters living in negative states, which harmed the church’s work. I was walking a path contrary to God’s intention. Now I have come to understand that we should not seek blessings in our faith but should pursue the truth and cast off our corrupt dispositions, be able to submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements and become a reasonable person. Like Job, who praised God’s righteousness whether he received blessings or suffered misfortune, he had genuine submission to God and was an extremely reasonable person. Moving forward, I became willing to correct my mistaken views on pursuit, submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements and fulfill my duties as a created being. As for my illness, I would continue with normal medication and treatment, pay attention to my diet, and exercise appropriately. When I let go of my desire for blessings, I felt much more at ease and was more motivated in my duties. Later, I worked with the gospel workers to review deviations and problems, followed up on and supervised their work, and made adjustments to

unsuitable personnel. After some time, the effectiveness of the gospel work improved compared to before.

Later, I measured my blood pressure a few times, and to my surprise, my blood pressure was normal. I was so happy, but I also felt quite guilty. I reflected on how, when I lived in illness, I had no sense of burden for my duties, which caused losses to the work, but God did not dwell on my transgressions and gave me the opportunity to repent, and I felt so indebted to God. Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"In their belief in God, what people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials and refinement. In whichever aspects you are not purified and reveal corruption, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God's arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die in order to give up your schemes and desires and to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, if people do not have several years of refinement, if they do not endure a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the constraints of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects people are still subject to the constraints of their satanic nature, and in whichever aspects they still have their own desires and their own demands, these are the aspects in which they should suffer. Only through suffering can lessons be learned, which means being able to gain truth, and understand God's intentions. In fact, many truths are understood by experiencing painful trials. Nobody can understand God's intentions, recognize God's almightiness and wisdom, or**

appreciate God's righteous disposition when in a comfortable and easy environment or when circumstances are favorable. That would be impossible!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From these words of God, I saw that God is so wise in His work. A great illness seems painful from a human perspective, but God uses these pains to refine and cleanse people. Just like with my illness, though on the surface I seem to have suffered some pain, God has used this illness to purify the impurities in my faith in Him, and without the revelation of this illness, I wouldn't have realized the intention adulterated in my faith to gain blessings, and I would still be trying to deceive and barter with God in my duties, and I would eventually be revealed and eliminated by God. This experience has shown me God's earnest intention to save people. When I first believed in God, I enjoyed a lot of His grace, and at that time, I didn't understand much and thought that God was just a God who gave grace. But the truth is, the grace that God gives people is given to bring people before Him to accept His salvation. God's work in the last days is to express the truth and perform judgment, and at the same time, He arranges various environments to refine and purify people, so that they can submit to and worship Him and attain His salvation. In believing in God, I cannot only enjoy His grace, I must also experience judgment, chastisement, trials, and refinements, and I must pursue change in my corrupt disposition and shoulder my duty. Although I have suffered some pain from this illness, I have experienced that what God has done to me is His love and salvation, and I have also come to recognize the wisdom in God's work. I thank God from the bottom of my heart!

100. What I Learned During My Torture

By Li Xinyu, China

On the morning of July 28, 2007, during a gathering with a few brothers and sisters, police kicked open the door to the home in which we were gathering and came charging in. A fat officer holding a stun baton yelled, “No one move or we’ll break your legs!” The police officer’s vicious attitude enraged me and I replied, “On what basis are you arresting us? We believers conduct ourselves well and walk the right path.” The National Security chief cut in harshly, saying, “You say believing in God is walking the right path? Believing in the CCP is the only right path! We at the National Security Brigade are specifically tasked with catching believers in God. We’ve been spending sleepless nights in stakeouts for days just to catch you. Of all the things you could be doing, you had to devote yourself to believing in God!” Then, with a wave of his hand, he signaled his inferiors to begin searching the house. After completing the search, they handcuffed us and took us to the provincial public security bureau for individual interrogation.

As soon as I entered the interrogation room, the National Security chief slapped me several times across the face, which led me to become dizzy and distended in the head, my ears rang, my vision went dark and I could taste blood in my mouth. Immediately after that, four other officers who were standing to the side came charging over and began kicking and punching me. After a while, the National Security chief took a puff from his cigarette and pointed at me saying, “Judging by the look of you, you’re either a leader or an important member of your church. If you tell us what we want to know, we’ll let you go, but if you don’t, don’t blame me if I don’t treat you so nicely.” He also said, “Based on your body type, I’m

guessing you won't be able to take much torture. Just tell us: Who is your leader? Whose home is the church's money located at?" I didn't say a word, but just silently and continuously prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to be with me and give me strength. I resolved that no matter how the police tormented me, I would not be a Judas and betray God. Seeing that I wasn't saying anything, the National Security chief flung his cigarette on the ground and, with a motion of his hand, yelled, "Have at him! Beat him to death!" With that, several police officers began viciously beating me again. They then handcuffed my hands behind my back, pulled my pants down to my calves, took off my socks and stuck them in my mouth so that I couldn't scream, and then stuffed my head into my pants. The officers then took turns punching and kicking me and laughing heartily as they did so. There were also female officers watching on from the side that were laughing so hard they had to rest themselves on the table by their side. The officers were fooling with me like an animal and I felt incredibly humiliated. It was July and inside the interrogation room it was also extremely hot—in no time, my clothes were soaked with sweat. Blood oozed from cuts where I'd been kicked by the officer's leather boots, and the blood and sweat mixed together in the cuts, causing sharp pain. I also had several hematomas on my head from being punched. An officer then grabbed me by my hair and slapped me across the face before violently shaking my head left and right. Through gritted teeth, he growled, "Are you gonna talk or not?" I said, "I don't know anything!" He became enraged, grabbed my handcuffs and violently yanked my arms up behind my back. The pain in my arms felt like they had been broken and they made popping sounds as they were twisted. The handcuffs cut through the skin on my wrists, which began to bleed. Each time they yanked my arms up, the pain was nearly unbearable and I continually prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to give me faith and

allow me to stand firm in my witness for Him. Seeing that I was suffering badly, the National Security chief sadistically mocked me, saying, “What’s the matter? I told you that you wouldn’t be able to bear the torture. Stop holding out and start talking! Who is your leader? How do you communicate? Whose house is the money stashed at?” I didn’t respond to him. The fat police officer then kicked me in the calf, which immediately caused me to fall, kneeling to the ground. He then forced me to hold my arms out straight before placing a thick book on my hands. After kneeling for a while, I just couldn’t take it any longer and fell to the ground. The fat officer pulled me up, forced me to kneel again and began whipping my fingers with a wooden chopstick. Each time he whipped me, there was a searing pain in my fingers. As he beat me, he yelled, “How about this? Not so nice, is it? Why don’t you ask your God to come save you!” When he said that, all the officers broke out in guffaws. Their laughter enraged me and I cursed those demons in my heart. My legs were black and blue from kneeling and hurting as if it was being cut by a knife. Six of my fingers were bruised from the beating. Several months later, the fingernails on those fingers fell off.

At around 5 p.m., the police sent me to a detention center and, before leaving, specifically instructed the staff there, “Feed him only a small steamed bun and a bowl of soup. Let him have a nice long think about what he’ll tell us tomorrow.” They then locked me up in a small cell of less than 10 square meters. There were over ten other people locked in that cell and it was dirty and stinky. There were only two wooden planks placed on the ground and they were both claimed by the cell boss. I remember that during that night, I cowered in a corner of the cell, hungry and thirsty and suffering from a headache, distention in my head and searing pain on my face. I thought to myself, “They beat me so viciously today and didn’t get any

information from me. I wonder what they'll do to me tomorrow. If they keep torturing me, will I become crippled or die? If I become a cripple, how will I live the latter half of my life?" The more I thought, the weaker I felt and so I hurriedly prayed to God for help, "Oh God! I just can't take much more of this torture, but I don't want to be a Judas and betray You. Please help me, give me strength and protect me so that I can stand firm in my witness for You." Just then, I recalled a passage of His words: **"Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). Pondering over God's words, I realized that God had permitted me to go through this suffering to test me. He was helping me harden my resolve in the face of suffering. In the past, before I had been arrested, I always thought I had faith in God and would be willing to satisfy Him no matter how much suffering I had to go through. Yet, I had just been tortured and tormented for one day and I was already living in timidity and fear, worrying I'd be crippled or killed. Where was my true faith in God? My stature was still too small. After realizing God's intention, I didn't feel as timid or afraid and was willing to rely on God to stand firm in my witness for Him.

On the second day, the police took me to the National Security Brigade for further questioning. The chief pointed at me and said, "You better be well-behaved today! Do you have an answer to the questions I asked you

yesterday?” I said that I didn’t know anything. He became enraged and grabbed me by the hair, before slapping me across the face while yelling, “Let’s see who gives way first, you or my stun baton! Have at him! Beat him to death!” Five officers then came over and began kicking and punching me. One officer stomped on my back and forcefully handcuffed my hands behind me, causing great pain as my arms were twisted backward. The pain was so great that I very soon broke out in a sweat. A fat officer took a stun baton and waved it around, the baton crackled with electricity and he then shocked me twice with it. The shocks caused me to convulse and I couldn’t help but scream. The chief took the opportunity to try to persuade me, saying, “If you tell us who your leader is and whose house the money is located at, I’ll let you go right away. Your wife, children, and parents all need you to take care of them. Even if you don’t care about your own well-being, you should at least think for your family.” This caused me to waver a bit. I thought, “If I continue to refuse to say anything, they will certainly beat me to death. Maybe I can just give them some less important information and they’ll let me go home.” Then, I suddenly thought of God’s words: **“Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God’s words instantly awakened me. I had almost fallen for Satan’s plot. If I betrayed God and sold out my brothers and sisters due to heeding my fleshy feelings toward my family and coveting temporary leisure, I would be a God- and friend-betraying Judas, the kind God most hates. This would offend God’s

disposition and I would be cursed and punished. I was grateful for the enlightenment of God's words, which enlightened me and protected me from Satan's plot. I prayed to God, saying, "Oh God! No matter if they cripple me or kill me, I will never betray You and will not become a disgraceful Judas." After prayer, I felt more at ease and less miserable. When faced with the officer's interrogation, I sternly and righteously replied, "Believing in God is perfectly natural and justified, reasonable and legal, on what basis have you arrested me? Our country's constitution clearly stipulates that citizens have the right to religious freedom. Where is the religious freedom in my being tortured to death by you due to my faith?" Hearing this, the officer became enraged and yelled, "The claim of religious freedom is just something we say to satisfy foreign countries—in China, the CCP does not allow you to believe in God and your belief is illegal. We can kill the people who have been godized like you with complete impunity! Beat him to death! Let's see how long he lasts!" With that, they all pounced on me and began kicking and punching me. One of the officers whipped me hard on the face and body with a leather belt. The whipping left me with a bruised and swollen face and caused me to collapse on the floor. In the end, when they saw that I still wouldn't talk, they had no choice but to send me back to the detention center. The police only permitted me to eat a dinner consisting of a small steamed bun. I was so hungry that I didn't even have the energy to stand up and because I had been tortured and tormented continuously, felt dizzy, had searing pain and numbness in my face, my legs felt like jelly, and I was weak all over, I could only sit on the floor with my back against the wall. I felt like I couldn't take much more and thought, "If things keep going this way, I'll either be tortured to death or starved to death." Just then, I recalled a passage of God's words: **"The utmost faith and love are required from**

us in this stage of work. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is people's faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). Indeed, the police wanted to use torment, torture and starvation to wear me down, make me lose my faith and force me to betray God, but God was just using this difficult situation to perfect my faith. I thought of what the Lord Jesus said when He was tested: **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"** (Matthew 4:4). I believed that God's words are the truth and the life of man. I knew I had to have faith in God. I silently prayed to God in my heart, "Oh God, my flesh might be weak and forceless, but I am willing to live by Your words, not heed my flesh and stand firm in my witness for You...." After prayer, I felt a bit more at peace and less miserable and weak.

On the morning of the third day, the police once again brought me to the National Security Brigade for interrogation. As soon as I entered the interrogation room, an officer kicked me to the ground and forced me to kneel on the cement floor. The National Security chief loudly berated me, saying, "So have you made up your mind? Who is your leader? Whose house is the church's money located at? If you don't talk now, these torture devices will make you talk. We'll let you try every last one!" I didn't say a word, so they forced me to continue kneeling on the cement floor. Because I had been continually tormented and tortured and denied food, I had become extremely weak. After kneeling for close to an hour, I was completely spent and just couldn't kneel any longer. I felt weakness creep up in my heart and so I continually prayed to God, "Oh God! I just cannot take any more of this torture. I do not want to be a Judas and betray You. Please help me,

give me faith and allow me to stand strong.” After prayer, I thought of this passage of God’s words: **“Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God’s work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God’s words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Pondering over God’s words, I realized that I had been tormented and tortured by the CCP for my faith, and it is glorious and honorable to bear witness for God through persecution and tribulation. The officers used every possible torture method to force me to deny and betray God, but God’s wisdom is exercised based on Satan’s schemes. God was using this environment to perfect my faith, allowing me to see the hideous visage and demonic essence of the great red dragon, so that I would come to hate it with all my heart and thoroughly reject it. After understanding God’s intention, I felt much clearer and possessed a new strength. “I will not fall for Satan’s plots and will not let it wear me down. No matter how miserable and weak my flesh becomes, I must stand firm in my witness for God!” Seeing that I still wouldn’t speak, an officer poured me a big glass of water and with a plastic smile, said, “You haven’t had a good meal for a few days, right? You must be hungry! With your constitution, I doubt you can hold out much longer. Hurry up and tell us everything you know. We already ordered steamed buns and stir-fried vegetables and we can give some to you too. I mean, why put yourself through this misery?” I realized that this was Satan’s plot and so I silently prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to

protect me from Satan's trickery. After a while, the officer unlocked my handcuffs, brought over some of the vegetables, a steamed bun and a glass of water and said, "Have some food. When you're done, you can tell us what you know." I replied, "I don't know anyone and there is nothing I can tell you." The National Security chief was furious and abruptly stood up, grabbed me by my hair and slapped me across the face before kicking me to the floor and yelling, "Someone handcuff his hands behind his back and beat him to death! We'll see how long he holds out!" Four officers came over and handcuffed my hands behind my back. When they couldn't initially stretch my arms back to handcuff them, they yanked hard at my arms, leaving me in unbearable pain that caused me to scream. An officer then whipped me hard with a leather belt continuously. I felt excruciating pain throughout my body and the belt left multiple thick black and blue whip-marks on my skin. As he whipped me, he yelled, "I just don't believe you're made of steel and I know I can wear you down!" After that, he took off his leather boot and began beating me on the head and face with the sole of the boot. The beating left my head feeling numb and distended like it was about to explode. I was seeing stars and there was a deep, engine-like humming sound in my ears. After a little while, I completely lost hearing in my right ear. I said, "You damaged my right ear, I can't hear anything out of it now." The officer nonchalantly puffed at his cigarette and growled in a sinister tone, "If you go deaf, that's perfect. It will keep you from practicing faith in the future." Seeing that I still wouldn't talk after sustaining such a vicious beating, the National Security chief angrily yelled, "I just don't believe I can't get the best of you today! If you don't talk, we'll stab your fingernail with an iron awl. The fingers are connected to the heart—there's no way you'll withstand that suffering. Be smart: Tell us everything you know and cooperate with us. This is your best choice!" At the time, I felt a

bit scared—even a tiny thorn in my finger was painful enough, let alone a thick iron awl! Just the thought of it made my legs go limp and my scalp went numb. If they really pierced my fingernail with that awl, would I be able to bear it? I hurriedly prayed continuously to God for help, asking Him to give me faith and the resolution to bear suffering. Just then, I recalled a passage of God’s words: **“Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 75). God’s words gave me faith and strength. God holds sovereignty over all things—I had to rely upon God and have faith that He would lead me to overcome the torment and torture of those demons. Realizing this, I didn’t feel quite as timid and afraid. Seeing that I still wasn’t going to talk, they had me put out my hands straight on a table and then waved a 7-to-8-inch iron awl in front of my face. An officer then proceeded to stab my fingernail with the awl. The awl was extremely sharp and as soon as it pierced my fingernail I felt a stabbing pain. I continually called out to God, asking Him to give me the strength to bear that misery. Just when the officer was about to press down on the awl, another cop came rushing in and whispered something in the National Security chief’s ear. The chief yelled, “Leave one person behind to watch him. Everyone else, come with me!” Seeing this all unfold, I gave thanks to God for orchestrating a situation to allow me to escape their cruel and brutal torture.

Two days later, a police officer once again took me to the National Security Brigade for interrogation. A fat officer aggressively yelled, “If you don’t talk today, I’ll make you wish you were dead!” I said, “I don’t know anything. Even if you really kill me, there is nothing I can tell you.” The National Security chief came forward and kicked me to the ground, yelling,

“Even if you say nothing, we know all about you. You’re a church leader and you’re still being hard-mouthed!” He then grabbed me by the hair and slapped me across the face, saying, “Let’s see what gives way first, you or my shoes and belt!” He then bellowed, “Beat him to death!” Several officers then pounced on me and began punching and kicking me. One officer took off his leather belt and began whipping me. His belt left behind over ten welts from the whipping. He then took his shoe and began beating me hard with the sole of the shoe. I became dizzy, my head felt distended and I was in so much pain that I trembled and screamed. Ultimately, I just couldn’t take it anymore and wished that I could die and have it be over with. I thought to myself, “If I die, I won’t have to endure this suffering.” So, I went to slam my head on the wall, but an officer blocked my head with his thigh. It hurt him so bad that he jumped in pain. I then clearly remembered God’s words: **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God’s words gave me a sudden realization: Wasn’t I being a coward by seeking death when I couldn’t bear the suffering? Where was my testimony? It was then that I realized the officer blocking my head was God protecting me behind the scenes. God’s intention wasn’t for me to die, He wanted me to stand firm in my witness and humiliate Satan in the midst of this suffering. Realizing this, I felt deeply motivated and made a resolution: No matter how the police tormented me, I would hold strong, and even if I had only one last breath remaining, I would keep on living to stand firm in my witness for God! My heart was full of power and strength—I gritted my

teeth and prepared myself to endure even crueler torment. To my surprise, the National Security chief walked over and pointed to me saying, “You got the best of me! I just don’t see what it is in those books that makes you think it’s worth it to sacrifice your life for your God!” Another officer said, “People who have been godized like him should just be thrown in jail!” Soon after that, another officer said in an unctuous tone, “There’s still time to tell us what you know. I call the shots here, but once you get to the jail, I have no authority there. We’re giving you two options: Either you go home or you go to jail, it’s up to you!” I felt a bit weak at that moment, worrying about how much torment and cruelty I would face in my long time in jail and if I’d be able to endure it. What if they tormented me to death? I didn’t want to be a Judas, hurting God’s heart and being stuck with eternal regret, but I also didn’t know how I should experience the situation that now faced me. So, I prayed to God in my heart, “Oh God, I am about to be sentenced and sent to jail. I’m not sure how to endure this long and trying jail term, please guide me in submitting to this environment.” After prayer, I recalled this passage of God’s words: **“For everyone who aspires to love God, there are no unobtainable truths and no justice for which they cannot stand firm. How should you live your life? How should you love God, and use this love to satisfy His intentions? There is no greater matter in your life. Above all, you must have such aspirations and perseverance, and should not be like those who are spineless, those who are weaklings. You must learn how to experience a meaningful life and experience meaningful truths, and should not treat yourself perfunctorily in that way”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Faced with God’s demands, I felt ashamed. I thought of how I had made multiple resolutions before God that no matter what suffering I faced, I would always stand firm

in my witness for God and seek to satisfy Him, but when faced with a long prison sentence and period of torment, I didn't want to undergo such suffering and sought to escape that environment. Where was my submission and testimony? I thought of how, when Peter escaped from prison, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and said He would be crucified again for Peter. Peter understood God's intention, returned to prison voluntarily and was crucified upside down for God, bearing a resounding testimony. Peter had true love and true submission to God. I didn't have Peter's stature, but I had to emulate him and stand firm in my witness for God. I also thought of how when I became miserable and weak while undergoing torment and torture, God's words enlightened and guided me, gave me faith and strength and led me to overcome the cruel torment of those demons. When I was at my most miserable and weakest and was close to giving up, God miraculously orchestrated the people, events, things, and environment to open up a way for me and keep me from suffering any more torment. I truly felt how God was at my side, caring for and protecting me. God's love is so true, so I couldn't hurt His heart or disappoint Him. I quietly prayed to God, "Oh God! Even if I'm sentenced and must serve time, I will not give in to Satan. I will be resolute in standing firm in my witness to humiliate Satan." Later, with literally no evidence, they trumped up a charge of "disturbing public order and undermining the enforcement of the law" and sentenced me to one year and six months of reeducation through labor.

In my time at the labor camp, I never had a full meal and had to work fifteen to sixteen hours per day. We were tasked with polishing marbles at a rate of six hundred per day to start that later changed to one thousand per day. I have poor eyesight, so I worked relatively slowly and was often beaten for not completing my tasks. One time, another inmate got scared he wouldn't be able to finish his task and be beaten, so he stuck his half-

completed items in my “complete” box. When the warden saw incomplete items in my “complete” box, without waiting to hear my explanation, he forced me to lean my head against a wall and take off my pants before whipping me with a V-belt. The first time he whipped me, the wire immediately left a big welt on my leg, while the second crack of his whip sent me falling to the ground, unable to get up. Inmates standing on either side of the passageway laughed heartily at me. Indeed, the other inmates often bullied me. They would make me sleep next to the toilet and would intentionally open the toilet cover. The smell was so disgusting that I would get nauseous and throw up. They would also beat me with the soles of their shoes and I would often be woken by their beatings in the middle of the night, my head ringing from the blows. I never knew when they would begin beating me again and I would often be scared to go to sleep at night. I was always on edge, and combined with the over-taxation from work, my health continually declined. Faced with this cruel torment, the thought of my long prison sentence left me feeling miserable. I didn’t want to spend even one more minute in that demonic jail. At that time there was another old brother in my cell, and whenever he got the chance, he would quietly fellowship with me on God’s words to comfort and encourage me. I remember the old brother recited this passage of God’s words for me: **“When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object.**

Only this is true love and faith” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God’s words gave me faith and strength. This environment could hone my determination and my resolution to endure suffering—this was a good thing. After understanding God’s intention, I didn’t feel quite as miserable. I truly felt that God was always standing by me, caring for and protecting me, and enlightening and guiding me with His words. I had to rely on God to stand firm in my witness and could not give in to Satan!

In the course of enduring this persecution and tribulation, what I experienced most deeply was God’s love and salvation. Several times during particularly severe bouts of torture, when I felt miserable and weak, was ready to give up, and even felt like taking my own life, it was God’s words that gave me the faith and strength to endure and the resolve to stand firm in my witness. I truly sensed how when the great red dragon was cruelly persecuting me, God did not leave my side, instead protecting and looking after me and guiding me to overcome the demons’ ravages. God loves mankind most of all and He can save and perfect man. I am now even more resolute in my faith. No matter what hardship or persecution I go through in the future, I will follow God to the very end and stand firm in my witness for Him to thoroughly humiliate the great red dragon!



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